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TRAGIC RUSSIA



WACLAW GASIOROWSKI

TRANSLATED BY
THE VISCOUNT DE BUSANCY

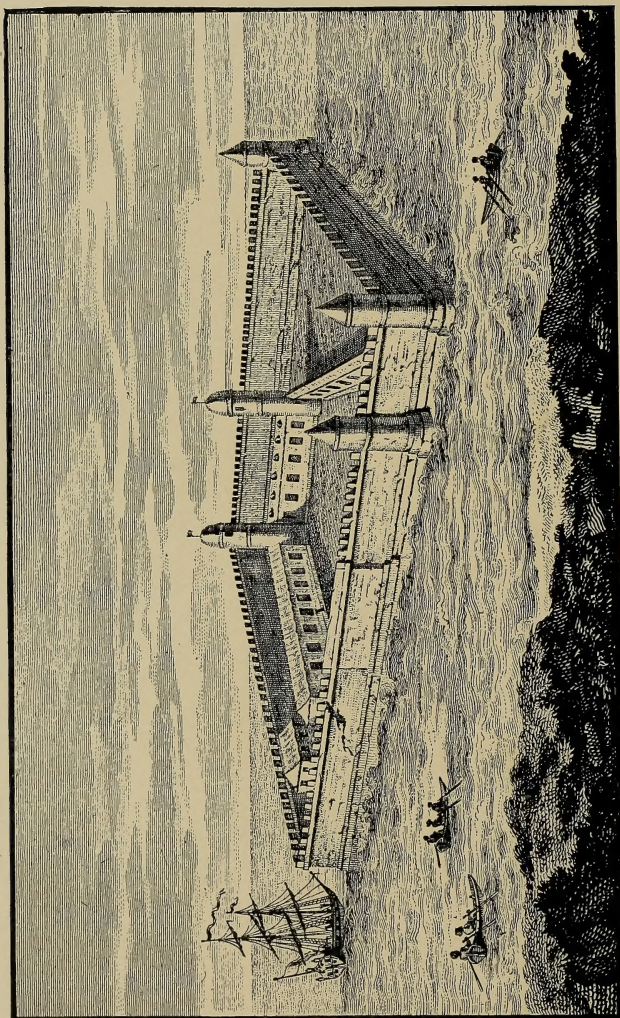


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TRAGIC RUSSIA



SCHLÜSSELBURG FORTRESS (ON THE LADOGA LAKE), IN WHICH IVAN VI. WAS MURDERED.

TRAGIC RUSSIA

BY

WACLAW GASIOROWSKI

AUTHOR OF "NAPOLEON'S LOVE STORY"

TRANSLATED BY

THE VISCOUNT DE BUSANCY

WITH EIGHT FULL-PAGE PLATES



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TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

SOME readers of this volume may express surprise that a nobleman bearing a feudal name should be the translator of a book which is so much opposed to the principles for which the true nobility stood for centuries. I would assure those readers that I am not a democratic nobleman—a renegade like Philippe Egalité, or Mirabeau and others—but that I agree with such writers as de Balzac, Bonald, Le Play, and especially Hippolyte Taine, in maintaining that all the hypotheses on which revolutions are made are contrary to the philosophy of nature, which proves that all the developments of life are made by continuity; that one of the most important laws of the development of life is selection—that is, fixed heredity—and that one of the most powerful factors of the human personality is race. If one applies the same criticism to the monarchical formula one sees that the permanency of the royal authority in a single family is nothing else than assured continuity; that noble rank—accessible to everyone who deserves it—is nothing else than organised selection, and that the respect for tradition is nothing else than respect for the race.

It is clear, therefore, that by giving my name to this book I do not associate myself with, nor

approve of, all that the Russian and other revolutionaries, anarchists, and socialists have done or are doing, but rather I express my indignation at the murders, treacheries, perfidies, and abuses of a—to say the least—doubtful dynasty. I am for monarchy, but for that of Saint Louis, who, seated under an oak tree, distributed justice gratuitously to all who sought it, and that of Henry IV. of France, who wished that every one of his subjects should have a chicken for dinner on Sunday. Thus I do not derogate the nobility of my ancestors, nor am I untrue to my caste.

BUSANCY.

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TRAGIC RUSSIA

INTRODUCTION

FOR some time Europe has had a conscience, and a very sensitive conscience indeed.

It is difficult to say what has caused it. Perhaps the events of 1848 or of 1871; perchance Frederick the Great playing the flute; maybe Catherine's correspondence with Voltaire; or the time when efforts were made in Spain to restore Moorish buildings destroyed by arch-catholic kings; or the rope by which Perovskaya was hanged.

Perovskaya? Well, yes; the same Nihilist Russian woman who participated in the assassination of Alexander II. She was hanged twice, for the first rope broke.

Europe sighed then, not only because of the dishonest Russian administration that failed to provide even a solid hanging rope; but also because of the lack of courtesy towards its women, as well as because the latter were too much emancipated. In the meanwhile, however, the same Europe expressed her satisfaction at the treatment of Perovskaya's companion, Hesia Helfman, who was pardoned; the reason why she was not hanged was that the dangerous Nihilist was pregnant.

But it would be a mistake to think that Europe became conscientious in 1881—viz., the year in which Alexander II. was murdered. No ; this conscientiousness of Europe appeared little by little, like a small cloud on a bright sky.

It is a fact that formerly Europe was less conscientious and sentimental ; she was so badly brought up that she was always frank. If she wished to kill someone, she lifted such a big axe that its blade shone a mile wide. When she wished to punish someone she played no political tricks. She never said, "I am civilising," but "I am subduing" ; she did not say, "I condemn," but "I murder" ; she did not say, "I convert," but "I conquer" ; she did not say, "I am sorry," but "I care not."

Fortunately, that boorish behaviour of Europe passed for ever ; the churlishness of her manners was changed into exquisite politeness, and her humanitarian feeling extended even to animals. But this is not all : Europe goes further, she "advances." Every day she develops new humanitarian ideas. She thinks of disarmament, of universal peace. Besides that, she would like to build palaces for anæmic parrots and sanatoriums for consumptive calves that are too lean for slaughtering purposes. Sorrow is one of the conditions of existence in this world ; therefore it appears from time to time on the white forehead of Europe in the shape of wrinkles.

Ah ! how naughty are those children of Europe ! If they would only obey, what a quiet world rule over the world.

For instance : there was a massacre in

Armenia. The Turks slaughtered two thousand defenceless people. Europe was indignant, and remonstrated by three beautifully-drafted, diplomatic notes that were deposited in Constantinople. The Turks slaughtered two thousand more Armenians before they stopped, apparently afraid of more new, beautifully-drafted, diplomatic notes. Then it was officially proved that the Sultan is a very decent fellow, *très distingué* too, perchance a little bit nervous—but if one will have so many wives, and so many expenses! It is very easy to condemn when one is not a Sultan!

However, Turkey is more Asiatic than European; it is difficult to stand for her and to measure her according to our standard. But France! The Germans have taken from her Alsace and Lorraine—well, it is done. France paid them five milliards of francs, and it seemed that everything was settled. Not at all! France is cross with Berlin, while honest Berlin has no grudge against Paris. Berlin even willingly speaks French. Berlin would be pleased to offer Paris, for the sake of reconciliation, a monument to Bismarck; or to write an operetta called “Trumpeter from Gravelotte,” but Paris . . .

Paris wishes to take no notice of the noble intentions of Berlin, and Europe is sorry, for Europe makes every effort to reconcile those who quarrel. She would like to establish peace from Cape Finisterre to the Ural, from Spitzbergen to Gibraltar.

France, however, is too *bonne fille* not to be

pacified with a date of Morocco, or by a fashionable song of "Internationale." But even that sorrow would not be so great for Europe, if she had no others, more painful. Naturally, by a painful sorrow, one could not mean some Irish, Hanoverian, Catalonian, Albanian, or even Polish dreams. Europe, over those questions calls for order! There is the problem which involves sadder and more perilous events.

Well, as it is proper for good housekeepers, Europe took care to have something agreeable, something pleasant for everyone's taste. Therefore, she recognised that every form of government is good; for every form of government a place of honour is given; every authority is appreciated. Consequently, besides autonomous states, there were some created half- and even one-fourth autonomous; autocratic are kept besides liberal and progressive, ecclesiastical besides republican, religious besides free-thinking, microscopic besides gigantic.

However, this is not the last word of the diligence of Europe, of her great tolerance. Indeed there, where begins the white Czar's empire, where the might of absolutism and the dimension of dominion remind one of the magnificence of Persia, Assyria, Babylonia, and Egypt; there, where millions are patriarchally humble, where rules good, modest, *batiushka*, where the people are naïve, where perhaps some laws are too antiquated for the twentieth century—there all these things neither should be different nor could be better.

Oh! Europe understands things well! Yes;

Russia is undoubtedly a little *ridicule*, but only to him who has not seen those millions of *muziks* kneeling before the Czar, who has not seen thousands of soldiers prostrated on the snow and waiting for the Czar's blessing, who does not know that in that gigantic Russia there are a hundred different nationalities and tribes, forty different languages, ninety different religions and sects ; that there are eighty per cent. of the people who can neither read nor write ; that a citizen of the Russian Empire yells for joy when he can get a piece of brown bread and a bottle of whiskey ; that he lives in a hut without a chimney, and that one sheepskin overcoat lasts his lifetime. Only such a man can find in Russia something *ridicule*, only such a man can dislike absolutism.

Such is the opinion of Europe, for she understands things well ! Europe knows the Czar well, also the Grand Dukes and ministers and generals, and even those amusing merchants with large beards and still larger purses. All of them are all right and civilised—according to the European standard. Every year there are plenty of them in Paris, Vienna, and Berlin ; it is they who, through their munificence and affability, made the name *prince russe* so magical.

The Baron Frideryks, the Minister of the Imperial Court, could he not rival any courtier of Versailles ? Could anybody notice anything despotic in that elegant gentleman looking at the sea from the Promenade des Anglais in Nice ? Can those soft, cunning eyes, looking on the dainty figures of Parisian girls trotting on the Place de l'Opéra, in Paris, be the eyes

of a cruel, heartless, and barbarian gendarme? Do they not deny the gloomy power of the Baron?

Or are those calumnies told about the Russian Grand Dukes most preposterous falsehoods? Has not Europe convinced herself so many times about it?

For instance, the Grand Duke Alexis Alexandrovitch, who was so slandered on account of the enormous sums appropriated by him from the Budget of the Russian Navy, is he not one of the most popular and disinterested of men? Any croupier in Monaco knows that. The Grand Duke—mighty lord, standing above law, millionaire, who has at his disposal the inexhaustible source of the Civil List—comes to the gambling saloon in Monaco, and talks with a lady. How wittily, how unaffectedly he talks! Then he throws to a croupier a bunch of thousand-franc notes and tells him to play for him at his own sweet will. In case he wins, the croupier must look for the Grand Duke, who does not even remember if he made any stake nor how much it was.

And now, can one imagine to oneself that impertinence to the said Grand Duke last winter in the Michaelovsky Theatre in St. Petersburg? A few minutes before the rising of the curtain, the Grand Duke Alexis appeared in his box; in the next box sat a lady of the Grand Duke's heart—Madame Ballette—a very pretty person, wearing still prettier jewels, amongst which was a magnificent cross of rubies. The audience looked at the two boxes. There was a strange

murmuring, followed by an impudent exclamation from the galleries: "Red Cross millions!" That exclamation was succeeded by a yelling at the lady of the Grand Duke's heart: "*Oddaj dengy!*"—"Give back the money!"

The Grand Duke left the box. Madame Ballette followed the example of her master, for contemptuous silence was the best answer to the vile insinuations, which any croupier in Monaco would appreciate at their value. Europe knows about that!

And, further, what do Europeans wish from the Russian statesmen, those dignitaries that dazzle by their refined conversation, who often adorn their faces with a melancholy smile when somebody criticises too freely their pan-Russian system of government? Their smile tells everything: it forgives ignorance, and it seems to say: "I also should like it to be different, for I am a Liberal myself, but with us it is not possible. Centuries are needed."

Yes, centuries are needed, gravely affirms Europe, and during every conversation she laughs at the trouble that that brave "Nika" has with his *muziks* and *kacaps*.

Two years ago the *muziks* wanted to have one more holiday. Though they have about one hundred, that does not suffice them; so Pobiedonosceff created a new saint's day. It was difficult to find in Russia a man who had the qualifications for canonisation. Fortunately, there was a dead man by the name of Serafin. Oberprocurator Pobiedonosceff made a report, and Serafin was appointed by the Czar to the

dignity of a saint in the Orthodox church. Naturally, Serafin was obliged to justify his entrance to the calendar, by a miracle. It is almost certain that Serafin was willing to perform a miracle, but it was too much for him, and he failed. But Pobiedonosceff announced that some crippled student from Riga was cured through making acquaintance with the late Serafin. In order that the miracle might carry greater weight the name of the student was given. It happened that at Riga University there was a student of that name, and he was so angry about having his name associated with such an impudent humbug, that, notwithstanding the danger of colliding with Pobiedonosceff, he announced *urbi et orbi* that he never had been crippled and that he never had anything to do with Mr. Serafin.

It is necessary to be a Russian statesman in order to conduct a long correspondence with different officials and find out whether "St." Serafin was not badly noted either by gendarmes or by the medical committee of the police, and then to draft a document of canonisation. All that, however, was a trifle for such a clever man as Pobiedonosceff.

Europe laughs and makes jokes, but in the meanwhile she acknowledges that it could not be different in Russia, and that although all this is a little naïve, yet in the meantime it is poetic.

Not always, however, does Europe speak of Russia as of the skeleton of an antediluvian animal. There are moments when Russia is put forward as an example worthy of imitation. Should there be a fight in some Parliament, or

some Panama scandal, or some Dreyfus affair which would make a representative of constitutional government infamous, immediately there are voices heard referring to Russia as free of political scandals, of Parliamentary comedies, of corruption of the Press, which is kept under control by the Imperial censor.

In this or in some way, Europe learned not only to respect Russia, but also to be proud of her, for it is agreeable to have at one's side such a Hercules, if it can be easily deceived or set on someone.

But lately something went wrong, even in patriarchal Russia. The state of affairs in Russia was always unusual, but it was only a proof that Russia still lived in the Middle Ages; therefore, the only conclusion one could draw from this was that one should not mix with her internal affairs, and that one should give her time to settle her own difficulties.

That conclusion lulled Europe to slumber even when in Russia the blows of the knout were accompanied by the explosion of bombs. The news received from Russia was not pleasant, but one should remember that little more than forty years ago it was not much better in England, France, and Spain.

In the meantime there appeared in European capitals men, partly beggars, partly students, partly philosophers, who united into societies, manufactured infernal machines, published thousands of revolutionary pamphlets, cursed in Russian at Russia before all, and aroused disgust by their distrusting and gloomy looks.

Before, however, Europe grew accustomed to those newcomers, before in those anæmic faces she could distinguish an old man from a youth, a woman from a man, they were followed by quite different Russian citizens, who were well-groomed, smiling, and amiable; only they threw light on those who preceded them. The word "Nihilist" was pronounced, and it more astonished than frightened.

Who were those "Nihilists"? What was their aim? Nobody cared to investigate. Europeans all accepted the condemnation (pronounced no one knows by whom) that "Nihilists" are worse than anarchists; that they are monsters, wishing to annihilate everything; that they are the shame of every nation.

That explanation was so convenient to Europe that since then all those who appeared in London, Vienna, Paris, and Geneva, were divided into two categories: the first, composed of most agreeable people, of most liberal gentlemen, of most amiable companions; the second, "Nihilists," who posed as artists, literati, students, and even savants.

In the meanwhile the shabby crowd of Russian emigrants and travellers shouted "Gendarmes!" on those who called them "Nihilists." That exclamation made Europe think a little, and having looked more attentively at those elegant, liberal, and amiable followers of "Nihilists," one was able to discover in them—spies!

There was some talk with regard to this, but as those elegant gentlemen know how to win the

goodwill of their comrades of the same trade, as their whole activity was limited to looking after "Nihilists," therefore it became customary for every large town beyond the boundaries of Russia to have its "Nihilists" and "Russian police."

Russian police are too well-bred to give any dissatisfaction by their behaviour, and nobody would complain of their presence except the "Nihilists," who accused the Russian police not merely of "taking care" of them, but of the unlawful abduction of their men—they are bold enough to call themselves men—on neutral territory.

Abduction took place again and again in broad daylight, without the knowledge or the consent of the authorities of the country in which it was accomplished.

A "Nihilist" walking in the street would be approached by a policeman and asked to follow him. So full of confidence in the protective wings of the constitution and eager to show his loyalty was the "Nihilist," that he would follow the policeman. Not far away a closed carriage would be waiting. The "Nihilist" would enter it willingly, would not even be astonished at the presence of two civilians. The vehicle would move on. Then the "Nihilist" would change into a packet of human flesh, and would be directed either to Schlüsselburg or Katorga. The "Nihilists," having learned that some others had disappeared, would raise an uproar. The local authorities would be a little embarrassed, but fortunately an ambassador or

a consul would deny the whole thing "officially." Why should they make a fuss about one "Nihilist" less? Then the whole abduction would be so improbable. For would it be possible to capture a man living in Rome and bring him to Russia, and pass through the custom-house and frontiers with him?

A reporter of one of the most widely-read Parisian papers had also something to say in the matter. In an interview which he had in Marseilles with "a very elegant Russian," he informed France, after the Grand Duke Sergius' murder, that that elegant gentleman was just going to Barcelona, for he had discovered a "Nihilists'" plot being hatched there, and that already in Marseilles he "had fixed all right those beasts of Nihilists." The publication of that interview passed without any attention from the authorities, but who cares in these republics if elegant Russian gentlemen do organise hunting parties in French territory? If it had been a question about quails, partridges, or hares, it would have been quite different, but "Nihilists" in France are not counted amongst game protected by the law. The states of Switzerland granted to "Nihilists" the right of living there, and they are even so inhospitable that they limited the Russian policemen's hunting propensities by watching them with their own police. There is nothing extraordinary in this, for it happens that in Switzerland there are to be found not only the highest mountains, the most charming views, and the best cows for milking purposes, but also dépôts

of anarchists, bombs, and the most rabid revolutionaries.

Hardly had Europe become familiar with "Nihilists," scarcely had she recognised them as a Russian article of export as *samovars* and *knouts*, when she was unpleasantly surprised by Russian literature.

Until lately Europe heard hardly anything about Russian literature, and then only when it was *à la mode* to solicit alliance with the most powerful of monarchs. Then partly from a wish to please, partly from curiosity, Europeans began to translate Russian authors and read them passionately, feverishly. Then enthusiasm expired. Why?

Europe was constrained to admit that Russian literature is undoubtedly very interesting, but being in such contradiction to Russian absolutism it seemed simply fantastic. For where did the Russian writer find such awful characters, such wild conditions of life, such religious persecution, such a fanatical fight for faith, such an abyss of misery and shameful abuses? Why are Russian authors so bitter?

Gogol, whose works contain the cream of Russian humour, says about the officials of a Government town: "They are all blackguards. The public prosecutor's a nice man, but he is also a swine."

And Schedrin, Tolstoy, Gorky—that *enfant terrible*!

Awful men! It is impossible to become friendly with them without having some trouble

with the Russian authorities, especially with policemen. They are all alike—

Pushkin was punished for the following verse :

“In Russia there is no law,
Only a post and on it a crown.”

Turgenieff was almost a “Nihilist,” and half of his life he spent in Switzerland; Schedrin was eight years in Katorga; Tolstoy is excluded from the orthodox church, and the police do not let him go out of Jasnaja Polana. About others it is not worth while talking; it suffices to look into the police archives.

It is difficult to believe that writers are such a bad lot; that every one of them, especially those endowed with broader creative minds, must needs be in continual trouble, not only with the police, but even with the chief of secret political bureaus.

In Russia the writers have a special way of rising above the crowd. In Europe literary men are given proper posts, their work is rewarded, sometimes with considerable sums of money; they get orders, ribbons. In Russia the distinction is quite different. It begins by the destruction of everything that is written by an author who distinguishes himself; then follows a perquisition and confiscation of all his papers; after perquisition police supervision; and then he is sent, without trial, to a comparatively uninhabited spot in Siberia.

These discoveries cooled down the enthusiasm of Europe for Russian literature, for by cultivating it one could not find one's way to the heart

of St. Petersburg. Therefore Europe discreetly withdrew its raptures for the creative power of Russian authors, and preferred to get all her information about Russia from "Pravitiel-stviennyi Wiestnik."

And Europe would have been comfortable with such ideas about Russia, if it had not been for that impudent Japan, for the successive murders of prominent Russian men, for the continual bursting of bombs not only in the Far East, but on the banks of the Vistula, Niemen, and Dnieper.

Europe became indignant, and said that such disturbances were not patriotic, and that they should be postponed until peace was concluded at Tokio. But as this opinion of Europe did not stop the disturbances in Russia, it was variously hinted that Germany pays those who make disturbances; that, to be sure, the English had come to an understanding with *muziks* as well as with other enemies of Russia such as Poles, Armenians, Finlanders, Georgians, etc.

Germany felt offended, and, to prove its friendship, at the expressed desire of a Russian consul instituted proceedings against some of its subjects, accusing them of publishing inciting proclamations against friendly States.

The trial, which moved the whole of German and Russian diplomacy, proved that the proclamations dealt with facts only, but when, in addition, it was disclosed that Russian money helped the attempt on Ferdinand of Bulgaria, and that Russian roubles had also much to do with the murder in Belgrade, the trial was

shortened by an order from those in authority, the accused were discharged, and every effort was made to keep the details of the trial secret.

Germany rendered to Russia the service of a bear. Russian diplomacy was indignant at such insinuations, for such events as that in Belgrade happen naturally, not because some statesman sighed: "Ah, if one could get rid of that Alexander." Then the Minister of the Exterior, Muravieff, poisoned himself not so very long ago. This little diversion, with the trial in Breslau, was followed by the murder of several Russian dignitaries, and the seething dissatisfaction spread alarmingly.

Russian murders! That quiet Russia, slumbering on the bosom of an autocratic Czar, wrapped in a sheepskin overcoat of ignorance; Russia that remains two hundred years behind Europe, that wishes to be equal to it by its political organisation!

But why is Russia murderous? Why does she soil herself with the blood of innocent victims? Why does patriarchal Russia, surrounding her rulers with a halo, produce so many assassins, murderers, or desperadoes? How, in a religious state, so carefully guarded against all innovations, where old customs are so respected, can so many awful spectres arise? Why, in a monarchy, where the ruler commands such respect, where a Minister is not merely a first official, but a master of a hundred million lives, where the traditions of the Middle Ages are preserved, should there arise such a host of reformers, fighting not only the conser-

vatism of their own country, but accusing the whole civilised world of corruption? Why in such a monarchy does there appear not only ghosts like dekabrists, nihilists, and anarchists, but mystic martyrs, preaching universal love, peace, downfall of nationalities, and the return to the simple, pastoral life?

In all that movement there is the awe of the working of the ocean, its stubborn persistency, its lack of sensitiveness. The ocean breaks down barriers in one place, and builds elsewhere; with its rising tide it brings tribute to the coast, with its ebbing waters it carries away its plunder.

Such are the laws of seas, nations, and civilisation. One has to pay with life for every pillar driven in the stream of struggle for life: pay with thousands of existences for every new turn of that stream.

In such continual evolution is spent the work of human beings, and the evolution is its blessing and its curse. Evolution advances; it must advance, even over corpses.

CHAPTER I

Bloody Ivan—Godunov—Two impostors—Michael Romanov—Alexis Romanov—The Narishkins slaughtered in the Kremlin—Peter I. and his *coup d'état*—Did Peter I. deserve the name of "Great"?—Was he civiliser of Russia or not?—Peter as executioner—His private life—Martha Skavronskaya, daughter of a workman, Peter's wife, and then Czarina—Her dissolute life and numerous amours—Peter the murderer of his own son—Peter personally knouting his former mistress—Moëns's death and Peter's behaviour on that occasion—Peter's wife (Catherine Martha Skavronskaya) repudiated, avenges herself—Peter dies "suddenly."

UNTIL the sixteenth century Russia lived through the same bloody times of feudalism as did the rest of Europe; perchance, more bloody on account of the invasion of the Mongolians, and of republican disturbances in Novgorod, Pskov, and Viatka. The murdering of princes and kings flourished, not only for the sake of the supreme power, but, strange to say, also for the purpose of limiting autocracy.

Not till the sixteenth century was Russia united under the sceptre of the Czars of Moscow. In that century the actual Russia began, and Ivan the Terrible is the personification of its absolutism.

Ivan IV., tyrant, murderer of his son, half-beast, half-madman, became at last a victim of poison.

The followers of Ivan were of the same disposition, and the same fate awaited them: they

reached the throne by murder, and were murdered in their turn.

Ivan IV. died in 1584 and left two sons, Feodor and Dimitri. Feodor fell into Godunov's power, became his son-in-law, and . . . "died suddenly" in 1598. After Feodor his brother Dimitri should have succeeded, but Godunov murdered him and became Czar.

After seven years Godunov died, also "suddenly," leaving a son, Feodor II.; but then an impostor came forth, who claimed to be the murdered Dimitri and succeeded in winning some partisans. Feodor II. was murdered by this pretender, who ruled "happily" a few months.

In the seventeenth century the history of Russia began with Schuiski's conspiracy, the murder of the pretender, and the coronation of the former as Czar. But after the first pretender there came forth another Dimitri. Schuiski wished to apply terrorism against those who were in favour of this claimant to the throne, but only succeeded in arousing the whole nation against himself. He was deprived of the crown, shut up in a monastery, and strangled there. A year later the same lot awaited Impostor II.

In the twenty-nine years following the death of Ivan IV., Russia had seven Czars, in addition to two years of interregnum.

Michael Romanov was the next Czar. He was cruel in a measure, but neither too autocratic nor daring enough to trifle with Dumas. He died a natural death in 1645. Michael was succeeded by his son Alexis, and his reign was

that of his favourite Morozoff. The Russians tried several times to shake off the chains which Morozoff put on them, and finally they succeeded in forcing the Czar to get rid of his favourite. Alexis yielded, but not wishing that the people should impose their will on him, took precautions for the future by originating a "secret service."

Alexis died in 1676, leaving three sons and six daughters. It seemed that there was enough of the Romanov blood to make the dynasty lasting, but it was extinct in the third generation.

Alexis was succeeded on the throne by his eldest son, Feodor, who died "suddenly" during the sixth year of his reign.

With Feodor's death murders became rife on the Russian throne. They were originated by the Czarina Sophia, and were made a lasting institution by Peter the Great.

Feodor wished to have as his successor, not his second brother Ivan, but Peter, who was the youngest. Peter's succession was backed up by the Narishkins, for Peter was born of Alexis's second wife, *née* Narishkin. But Vasilis Galitzin, Feodor's favourite, did not wish to give up power, and made a *coup d'état* in favour of the Princess Sophia, who was his mistress. The Narishkins were surrounded in the Kremlin and all slaughtered. Ivan was proclaimed Czar, Peter was appointed his successor, and Sophia became the Regent. In effect, Galitzin was the ruler. Galitzin determined to invest Sophia with the supreme power. Submissive and ill, the Czar Ivan was not a serious obstacle. As for Peter, he was not only a healthy and robust youth, but

had already shown some capacity for intriguing. Galitzin made up his mind to get rid of him, and for this purpose he won to his side a regiment of regulars called "Streltsi." The youthful Peter, however, anticipated the execution of Galitzin's plans. He imprisoned the Regent Sophia, surrounded the Czar Ivan V. with guards, sent Galitzin to Archangel, and disbanded the regiment.

All this happened in 1689, seven years after Sophia became Regent. Apparently Ivan was the Czar, but Peter surrounded him so effectually with guards that nobody could see him. In 1696 Ivan V. died, after the manner of his predecessors, "suddenly." He left two daughters, both minors.

Peter proclaimed himself Czar, but as he was uneasy about his half-sister Sophia, who was kept in a monastery in Moscow, she also in 1704 died "suddenly." This time the less official and more exact historians added: "strangled."

Peter was called by the official historians, "The Great," but one of the independent Russian writers said that the qualification "great" was surely followed by "scoundrel," and that only for the sake of brevity he was called "great." That biting remark is so well founded that it is impossible to understand how some people concede to Peter any merits as a civiliser.

According to his contemporaries, Peter travelled, studied, and civilised his country! But in the eighteenth century the German countries, in which Peter spent most of his time, had very few elements of culture. The truth is, that Peter

did not care in the slightest for spreading true civilisation in his country ; all he wanted was to make autocracy firm and lasting.

Peter's reforms began by rooting up the republican ideas, which had then a firm hold on the people. He abolished the election of officials and judges ; introduced division into castes ; originated fourteen classes of officials ; violated the freedom of the Church by abolishing the authority of the Patriarch and substituting a Synod controlled by the Czars. Finally he crowned his efforts as a civiliser and reformer by making the peasants slaves to the noblemen.

These civilising propensities were appreciated by Peter's subjects so much that the big bell which used to ring for the gathering of the Dumas in Moscow, resounded in alarm. But Peter was wide awake. He quenched the rebellion in a sea of blood. In an access of wrath this European and civilised Czar ordered that fifty blows of the knout should be given to the bells, which were afterwards exiled to Siberia !

After this, the civilising efforts of this " great " Peter were directed against the wearing of long beards and of jack-boots. When his subjects dared to protest against such ridiculous reforms, Peter sentenced eight thousand people to death. It was difficult to execute such a large order. The condemned men were driven into a square, near Moscow, surrounded by a high fence, and here the Czar-reformer, helped by his favourites, performed his civilising mission, chopping off the heads of unfortunate men whose only crime was that they were fond of long beards. The Czar's

Ministers, following such an exalted example, competed for the prize given to the one that executed the greatest number. This was won by the Czar's favourite, Menshikov.

The best helper Peter found was a certain Romodanowski, the head of the secret bureau of inquisition; this man ruled the Empire during Peter's absence, and he was his right hand in any iniquity.

The peasants were murdered and knouted into bringing their wives and daughters to the Imperial balls. Peter was a drunkard, and consequently one of his reforms was the introduction of alcohol.

One could tell also of the hundreds and thousands of victims, sacrificed either through the Czar's thoughtless barbarism, or through the execution of his broad plans, of which the construction of St. Petersburg on marshes is an example. The above-mentioned facts will, however, suffice to characterise that would-be great ruler who made slaves of the whole nation and who pushed his country backwards instead of pushing it forward. If it were not for Peter, Russia to-day would be on the same level of progress as the rest of Europe.

Peter's bad reputation as a ruler cannot be redeemed by the virtues of his private life.

His first wife was Eudoxia Lapushkin: by her he had a son named Alexis, whom he made successor to the throne. Peter soon got tired of his first wife, and fell in love with Anna Moëns, daughter of a dram-shop keeper in Moscow. The Czarina Eudoxia looked for consolation to a young *boyar* (nobleman), Chleboff.

Peter, however, not wishing his wife to imitate him in his amours, ordered her to be shut up in a monastery and Chleboff to be impaled.

Even in this Peter wished to be "great." The impaling was done in his presence, and while the unfortunate lover of the Czarina was in agony, the Czar climbed the executioner's platform, and, placing himself in front of the victim, he began to preach to him about the future life. Chleboff was fainting from pain, but, noticing the Czar's ironic smile, he collected his ebbing strength and spat in Peter's face.

After thus settling his wife's infidelity, Peter returned to Anna Moëns and began to make plans to put on the Imperial throne the daughter of a dram-shop keeper. These, however, were never accomplished.

In a little town, called Lannenwarden, in Infant, lived a poor workman, Samuel Skavronskaya, a Lithuanian. He had a daughter of the name of Martha. The workman died and a sexton of a Protestant church took care of Martha. When she grew up she entered the service of Herr Glück, a minister in Marienburg. She did not heed her reverend master's admonitions for she had a love intrigue with the young Count Tyzenhaus, who frequented the Glücks' house. The clergyman, when he noticed this love affair of Martha's, married her to a Swedish dragoon. After that time Martha was constantly in camp with her husband until she was taken prisoner by the Russians, together with her husband and other soldiers. According to the war customs of those times the commandant of the victorious

detachment considered Martha as his captive. He, then, sent her as a present to his chief, General Bauer. Saheremetieff met her at Bauer's, and as the latter was an old man, he proposed to play dice, with Martha as the stake. Saheremetieff won, and was in the seventh heaven, for Martha was really a beautiful woman. From Saheremetieff Martha passed to Menshikov, through whom she made the acquaintance of Peter I.

From that moment Martha advanced rapidly. She met the Czar in 1705, and in 1706 she had a daughter by him. In 1706 she entered the Orthodox Church, and Peter married her. She bore him two more daughters, and in 1711 she was proclaimed the lawful wife of the Czar of Russia under the name of Catherine.

That extraordinary marriage was so much the more unusual, as the dragoon, Martha's husband, and Eudoxia, Peter's wife, were still alive.

The Czarevitch Alexis was indignant at his father's union with Martha Skavronskaya. As he disapproved also of his father's reforms, he left Russia, was received well at different courts, and married the daughter of the Duke of Brunswick.

Peter was very angry with his rebellious son, and determined to get him into his power at any price. For this purpose he sent to him his confidant, the Count Tolstoy, who carried the most cordial letters and a solemn assurance of forgiveness. The Count Tolstoy succeeded in convincing the prince that his father was really longing to see him, and he returned to St. Petersburg accompanied by his wife and three-year-old son.

On his arrival he was chained and imprisoned. Peter court-martialled him and ordered the court to sentence him to death.

The judges sentenced him to death, but afterwards had pity on the prince, and appealed to the clemency of the Czar. Before the answer came, Alexis was murdered in prison by order of Peter.

After this Peter resolved to make his wife Catherine, *née* Martha Skavronskaya, his successor to the throne, and for this purpose she was solemnly crowned at Moscow. Catherine, however, did not feel embarrassed by her exalted position, nor did she disdain love intrigues. The best proof of her taste in that direction is undoubtedly the incident with the adventurer, Vice-Admiral Villebois. During a drinking bout, the Czar sent Villebois with some message to Catherine. Villebois, quite drunk, went so far with his mission, the contemporary memoirs say, as to assault the Czarina, who, perchance, would have overlooked Villebois' daring if it had not been done in presence of some ladies-in-waiting. Peter was very indulgent to his favourite, for he sentenced him merely to imprisonment for a year.

Catherine was always fond of short love intrigues; she conceived a strong passion for the young chamberlain Moëns, brother of the former mistress of the Czar who was then married to General Balk.

That intrigue lasted quite a long time, carefully guarded and sustained by the General's wife, till one of Peter's spies notified the Czar that

his wife was unfaithful to him. Peter pretended to go away, and the same night he found Anna Moëns keeping watch and Catherine in Moëns' arms.

The Czar momentarily satisfied his anger by thrashing his wife and imprisoning her lover. This did not mean, however, that he gave up his vengeance ; he only postponed it in order to satisfy it more effectually.

He surrounded Catherine with guards, and had decided to have her head cut off then and there, when Menshikov, who was always well-disposed towards his former mistress, represented to Peter that, should he order his wife's decapitation, he would make public a scandal about which nobody knew anything ; that he would discredit himself, and that after the death of the Prince Alexis and the Czarina Eudoxia, he, the Czar, would leave too black a mark upon history, of which he was such a great ornament.

Peter, pressed by Menshikov and Repnin, gave way ; but he did not mean to forget Moëns and his sister. He was so zealous about them that he carried on him constantly the key of the room in which they were kept prisoners, and brought them water and bread himself.

After one week of seclusion Moëns and his sister were tortured. This was done in order to force them to say that " they induced the Czarina Catherine to plot against the Czar and against the Russian Empire."

The torturing made the prisoners confess what the Czar wished. Anna Moëns was sentenced to receive two hundred lashes and to be deported to

Siberia. It should be stated that Peter himself knouted his former mistress.

Moëns was sentenced to be decapitated. The execution took place in Senate Square, and Peter looked on from a window. When the victim's head rolled down from the block, the Czar could not master his joy, but rushed into the square, mounted the platform, seized Moëns's head by the hair, and laughed with satisfaction.

The tragedy was not ended yet. Peter remembered Catherine. The same day he asked her to take a walk with him. At the end of their promenade was the spot where Moëns's head was fixed on a pole. Catherine fainted.

Peter, having given up the thought of decapitating Catherine, had changed his mind in regard to the succession. He burned the will by which the succession was to pass to Catherine. The question then was to find a successor. The Czar would not hear of little Prince Peter, the son of the murdered Czarevitch. He made up his mind to leave the crown to his daughter Anna, and to marry her to the Duke of Holstein.

Catherine, repudiated and despised, watched well the course of events. Her former master, Menshikov, was also vigilant. He noticed that he had less influence with the Czar, and understood that the alteration of the will meant his own downfall.

Menshikov came from Peter's school, and Catherine was fond of ruling, consequently Peter died "suddenly," and at an opportune moment for Catherine and Menshikov.

The rule of the reformer was so much disliked throughout Russia that no one thought of inquiring about the cause of Peter's death, for his death seemed to be a blessing for everybody.

CHAPTER II

Menshikov surrounds the Council of State—Martha Skavronskaya made Czarina as Catherine I.—A Czarina who could neither read nor write—Menshikov true ruler—Catherine's daughter Anna marries the Duke of Holstein—Who was Peter III.'s father?—Menshikov's plot to marry Peter III. to his daughter—Elizabeth, Catherine's second daughter, and her amours with the Duke of Holstein—Eutin—Catherine's death—Menshikov overthrown by the Dolgorukis—Peter II.'s death—Anna of Courland succeeds him—Her lover Biren's bloody reign—His regency during Ivan VI.'s infancy—Münich's plot—Biren sent to Siberia—Lestocq successful in putting Elizabeth on the throne—Razumowski her lover—Why Münich was sent to Siberia—Peter III., successor to the throne—Sophie Anhalt-Zerbst his wife—Her plot—Saltykov and his love intrigues with the Czarevitch's wife—Who was Paul's father?—Elizabeth's disgraceful life—Panin's career.

THE question of succession arose immediately. The majority of courtiers and dignitaries was in favour of Peter II., the son of murdered Alexis, for they hoped that they would be able to get back the former political freedom and privileges.

But Menshikov, the murderer of Peter, was not to be baffled so easily. Consequently, when the meeting was held in the Senate Palace, Menshikov surrounded the building with grenadiers, and forced the nobles to accept Martha Skavronskaya as the Empress of Russia.

Peter the Great was a regicide. He hated everything Russian; he murdered hundreds of the best families, sent to Siberia thousands of

honest people, surrounded himself with German adventurers, and left to his nation the infamous and degrading saying : " If you wish to find an honest Russian, look at the palm of his hand. If there is no hair on it, then he is a scoundrel and blackguard." His historical greatness, however, and his monuments were not derived from the nation, but from a murderer and a prostitute.

Thus in 1725 Catherine I. ascended the Russian throne. She was like a Czarina out of a fable, for she could neither read nor write.

Catherine began her rule by making all the Skavronskayas "Counts," by giving a pension to her dragoon husband, and by choosing for herself at least two lovers at once. Menshikov was the true ruler.

The question of succession was urgent, but the energetic Martha did not ponder over it long. She married her daughter Anna to the Duke of Holstein ; the first child born from that union was destined to ascend the Russian throne. There were some difficulties, however, for the Duke was incapable of becoming a father. It was a trifle to Martha. She brought to the rescue Colonel Bruhmer, an aide-de-camp of the Duke, and the best proof that the advice of the experienced mother was good in this case is that one year after the wedding a son was born—Peter III. The contemporary writers say, "son of the Duchess of Holstein was born." Bruhmer was appointed governor and tutor to the future occupant of the Russian throne.

Soon after that there was a conflict between

the Duke of Holstein and Menshikov. The latter discerned that the father of the future Czar had the intention of getting rid of him. Consequently he plotted for the purpose of assuring the lasting influence of the Menshikovs. The plan was simple: the crown was to be secured for Peter II., the son of the murdered Czarevitch, who was to marry Miss Menshikov. It was a daring enterprise, for about a year previously the same Menshikov was opposed to Peter II. But Peter II. was only a youngster, twelve years old. Russia, however, was accustomed to such surprising changes.

The Duke of Holstein had his partisans, and they warned him of Menshikov's plot. The Czarina was advised about everything, and she was asked to imprison Menshikov. But Catherine could not be so hard on her former master; consequently, she was satisfied with his promise that he would plot no more against the Duke of Holstein. Menshikov took an oath, but, being a clever diplomatist, he acted still according to his will.

Catherine's second daughter, Elizabeth, was in love with the Duke of Holstein-Eutin, a Protestant bishop; but as she was forbidden to marry him, she followed the good example set by her mother, which was not difficult, for the Duke of Holstein-Eutin was then in St. Petersburg. Elizabeth, when her sister Anna was married, succeeded her as a secretary to her mother, for whom she read and signed all State papers.

Menshikov determined to use Elizabeth as a tool. He promised her that he would help her to

marry her beloved Duke of Holstein-Eutin, if she would consent to sign an order without communicating its contents to the Czarina. Elizabeth consented, and the same night the principal partisans of the Duke of Holstein were arrested.

In the meanwhile, Catherine was dying, the result of a procured miscarriage. While she was dying, and the Duke of Holstein was abusing the guards for preventing him from entering the palace, Menshikov and Osterman forged a will in favour of Peter II., who became Czar and *fiancé* to Miss Menshikov. The Duke and the Duchess of Holstein, with their son, afterwards Peter III., left the country. As for Elizabeth, she was punished by destiny, for her beloved Duke of Holstein-Eutin died from smallpox.

Menshikov's influence was paramount for the time, and he did not expect that the Dolgorukis would overthrow him. It was not difficult, however, to obtain from the capricious-spirited and youthful Czar his signature to a document by which the Prime Minister was sent to Siberia. Naturally, the Dolgorukis removed Menshikov in order to get his place. They even proposed that the Czar should marry Catherine Dolgoruki. It was not an easy matter, for the fourteen-year-old boy fell in love with his aunt Elizabeth, who, after the death of the Duke of Holstein-Eutin, looked for consolation to Alexis Razumowski, son of a Cossack-grenadier, serving in the capacity of trumpeter. But she was ready to accept the love of the youthful Czar. The Dolgorukis, however, were able to convince the boy that Elizabeth was not worthy

of him and to persuade him to marry Catherine Dolgoruki. The day of the wedding was fixed when the Czar fell a victim to smallpox and died at the age of fifteen.

Peter II.'s unexpected death permitted the Supreme Council, composed of ministers, senators, and other dignitaries, to hope that they would decide for the first time for a great many years the question of the succession. The nearest candidates were Peter III., "son of the Duchess of Holstein," and Elizabeth. But the Supreme Council were afraid of the blood of Peter the Great, and wishing to limit absolutism, they elected to the Crown Anna of Courland, widowed daughter of Ivan V., half-brother of Peter the Great. The Council drafted a document by which the power of the Czars was curtailed. Among other provisions were the following :

"The Duchess should not bring with her Biren, her lover.

"She should not squander the Crown properties, and should not give them away.

"She should not punish her subjects without evidence of their guilt."

The decision of the Council was favourable to the Dolgorukis, for the Prince Vasil was formerly Anna's lover, and he hoped to be reinstated in her favour.

Anna signed the document in Mitava, and started for Moscow, together with her lover, Biren. Here the Czarina, following Biren's advice, proclaimed herself autocrat, and let him rule the country. Biren began by numerous executions, especially of the Dolgorukis. Every

whisper of dissatisfaction, every sign of disapproval, was punished either by quartering and breaking on the wheel, or cutting out of tongues and burning out of eyes.

Only a hundred and fifty years had passed since the death of Ivan the Terrible, yet there had been no less than sixteen reigns in Russia. The last one was more terrible than that of Peter the Great, and more bloody than any other period in the history of Russia.

Biren was the virtual ruler, and was treated like a monarch. He assumed the title of Duke of Courland. All posts of importance were given to Germans. Hundreds of them watched Biren day and night. The Czarina was so infatuated with Germany, that when Elizabeth complained to her that a brother of Biren's wife was trying to show his love to her in the way Villebois did to Catherine I., Anna dismissed her first cousin, telling her that she should not refuse to a Courlandish nobleman that which she gave every day to a simple grenadier.

The question of succession had to be settled again. Anna had her own views about it. She had a sister, the Duchess of Mecklenburg, and Anna destined the crown for the son of the Duchess, who was therefore invited to the Russian Court and was married to the Duke of Brunswick. From this union Ivan VI. was born.

A few months after the birth of Ivan VI. Anna died, but far-sighted Biren had a will forged by Osterman, which deprived the Duke and Duchess of Brunswick of the regency. Biren

was to remain at the head of the Government until Ivan VI. came of age.

Biren magnanimously accepted the regency that was "offered" to him, and began to realise his plan, for he had not the slightest intention of waiting till Ivan came of age. Biren desired to secure the throne by means of matrimonial alliances. Besides the Czar Ivan, there were Elizabeth and Peter III., "son of the Duchess of Holstein." Biren resolved to marry his son to Elizabeth, and make Peter III. marry his daughter. Having thus doubly connected his family with that of the Czars, he could remove Ivan VI. and rule by himself.

Biren's first minister and favourite was Munich, a very ambitious German, who was jealous of Biren's power. Munich resolved in his turn to overthrow Biren. It was a very easy matter to win over to his plans the Duke and the Duchess of Brunswick, and for the execution of the plot a detachment of grenadiers was sufficient. Munich, helped by Manstein, the commandant of grenadiers, surrounded the Regent's palace during the night, imprisoned him in Schlüsselburg, and got rid of his most ardent adherents.

The Duchess of Brunswick proclaimed herself Regent, her husband commanded the army, Biren was sent to Siberia, and Munich, thanks to Osterman's intriguing, was unexpectedly dismissed.

This revolution was completed within a few months of Anna's death (1740). It seemed that at last Russia would be able to breathe freely ;

but it was only an illusion. The Regent had called to the Court her former lover, Lynar. The husband of the Regent was indignant, and there were quarrels and troubles. Osterman ruled the country. The Czar of Russia was taken care of by nurses.

But during the fifteen years following the death of Peter the Great there were five *coups d'état*, accompanied by a change of rulers, consequently it was not extraordinary that a man of such modest social standing as Lestocq, a French physician, should plan yet another. Lestocq's plan was to put on the throne the beautiful and charming Elizabeth, daughter of Martha Skavronskaya, *alias* Catherine I. Lestocq communicated his plans to the French ambassador, who was anxious to win the influence of the Czarina for France, and in that way to give a blow to Maria Theresa's politics. The only question was about money, which was furnished by the ambassador.

Elizabeth—who did not worry the trumpeter of the grenadiers, Razumowski, by her fidelity, and had always many “personal” friends amongst the soldiers of the Preobrajenski regiment—helped by Lestocq and his money, succeeded in a few hours in gaining three hundred grenadiers to her side. She arrested the Regent, her husband, Czar Ivan VI., Osterman, and others.

The beautiful daughter of Martha Skavronskaya became Czarina in 1741.

Elizabeth's accession to the throne was followed by several plots, one more important than the others was organised by Madame Lapushkin; but the young Czarina was able

to deal with rebels. On the other hand, the grenadiers who helped Elizabeth were raised to the ranks of nobility, and gold and honours were showered upon them. Naturally Razumowski's career gained by this change. The trumpeter was not only made general and the first person amongst all dignitaries, but he was also secretly married to the Czarina. Razumowski, however, was not ambitious, and was satisfied with his morganatic union, with the title of prince, and with the Anichkowski palace. His moderation had a favourable influence on Court affairs, for he was always a partisan of mild methods; his indulgence went even so far as to cause him to shut his eyes or to refuse to see anything evil in the intimacy of his brother with Elizabeth, and in other love intrigues of that worthy daughter of Martha Skavronskaya. The result of the relations between her and Razumowski was three children, who became the Princes Tarakanoff.

It should be stated that although Elizabeth was justified in sending to Siberia the supporters of the Regent Osterman and Golowkin, the severity shown towards Münich, who did not hold any official position during the *coup d'état*, was excessive. Of course, Münich's trial had no justification, for Elizabeth could not logically accuse him of that which she had herself ordered during her autocratic rule. Consequently, Münich was not guilty of anything against Elizabeth. Nevertheless he was sentenced to death and then pardoned and sent to Siberia. All this was done because Münich, while commandant of the guards during Anna's reign, placed a certain

trumpeter under arrest for a few days for insubordination. The trumpeter, on account of his arrest, could not come to the mistress who was waiting for him. The name of that trumpeter was Razumowski.

At the head of Elizabeth's government stood Bestuzhev, and he had such influence that a year later he was able to send Elizabeth's faithful servant Lestocq to Archangel.

Naturally, the question of the succession required to be settled again. Razumowski, being the Czarina's morganatic husband, could have secured the crown for his children, but he was not ambitious; therefore, Elizabeth, remembering her first love associations with Holstein, had decided to nominate as successor to the throne her nephew, "the son of the Duchess of Holstein-Gottorp," already once deprived of the throne by Menshikov—properly speaking, the son of Colonel Bruhmer—so-called Peter III.

The fourteen-year-old Duke Carl-Ulrich Holstein-Gottorp was invited to come to St. Petersburg; here he embraced the orthodox faith, and became the Grand Duke Peter Feodorovich (Peter III.). It was now considered necessary to arrange for the marriage of the Grand Duke. Elizabeth again followed the sentiment she had for her first lover, and chose for Peter the daughter of the Duke of Holstein-Eutin's sister, the Duchess Sophie of Anhalt-Zerbst.

Peter III. was a handsome young man. Sophie of Anhalt-Zerbst was almost as beautiful as Elizabeth. The young people were mutually

attracted to each other. It is true that the young Princess was more intelligent than her *fiancé*; but for the moment this difference mattered very little. They were both young, both Protestants, both Germans, and neither knew the language of the people over whom they were going to rule; consequently they had many points in common.

The day for the wedding was fixed, when the Grand Duke was taken ill with smallpox. The disease which fifteen years before caused the death of Peter II. was more lenient with Peter III., for it limited itself to disfiguring his fine face, which was rendered so terrible, however, that the Duchess Sophie fainted when she saw him for the first time after his illness.

She could, of course, have refused to marry a man physically repulsive, but the question in her mind was not how to avoid becoming the wife of Peter Gottorp, but how to get hold of a crown to which Peter was only an adjunct. It was desirable that the encumbrance should have some merits also, but even the drawbacks of his person did not lessen the value of his crown. The Duchess had common-sense, and was ambitious; consequently, without persuasion, she became orthodox in 1745, on which occasion she took the name of Catherine, and in the same year married Peter.

This marriage, which is cited as proof that the actual rulers of Russia have no right whatever to the name of the Romanovs, should be fixed in our minds by the recapitulation of Peter III.'s genealogy.

Well, then, Peter III. was son of Anna, elder sister of the Czarina Elizabeth, daughter of Peter the Great and Martha Skavronskaya (Catherine I.). Therefore, through his female ancestors, he had a little of the Romanovs' blood; but his real sire was Colonel Bruhmer, a Swede, while his putative father was a German, the Duke of Holstein-Gottorp. Consequently Peter III. could only claim the name of Holstein-Gottorp (?), and if he had had any descendants they would have been only Holstein-Gottorps. The last Romanov was Peter II., a son of the murdered Grand Duke Alexis, who was killed by his own father. On the maternal side Peter III. had as much Russian blood in his veins as had Ivan VI. and Elizabeth's illegitimate children. That small amount of Russian blood was soon to disappear in the descendants of Peter III.

The young couple did not agree at all from the first day. There were many reasons for it. Peter was greatly inferior in mental power to Catherine, consequently he could not endure his wife's cold and self-possessed assurance, rendered the more unbearable because the favouring courtiers imbued him with a much exaggerated idea of his own importance. He had, too, but a private soldier's education, while his wife was cultivated and refined. Doubtless, the disfiguration caused by the smallpox made him irritable, while it must have influenced Catherine's feeling towards him; for while Peter III., a good-looking youth, could attract even an intellectual woman, the same Peter, deprived of physical

advantages, and not having any other merits, either of mind or of character, could not keep the love of his wife.

Elizabeth, the Czarina, did not pay any attention to the conjugal life of the young couple. She only got rid of Colonel Bruhmer, who was very much devoted to the Czarevitch. The suspicious Czarina, who witnessed five *coups d'état* and was heroine of the sixth, feared Bruhmer's influence, therefore she commanded him to go to Switzerland and to stay there. Peter, being only seventeen years old, needed a good tutor, but being deprived of a mentor, he spent whole days in barracks with the German soldiers, whom he hired, and drilled in Prussian ways, while his nights he passed in drinking. The discord between the young couple was very favourable for Court intrigues, for both Catherine and Peter were to be captivated and influenced.

The Prime Minister Bestuzhev understood the situation, but as he did not sympathise with the Czarevitch on account of his anti-Prussian politics, while Peter was a mad admirer of everything that was Prussian, and especially of Frederick the Great, he turned to Catherine. Soon there gathered round the Czarevitch's wife a strong party, the aim of which was to get rid of Peter and to put on the throne the Duchess of Anhalt-Zerbst. Naturally, it was only the beginning of a plan which Bestuzhev intended to develop.

The party began to act, beginning by telling Elizabeth about Peter's bad health, about his mental incapacity, about his drunkenness, and



PETER III.

his lack of respect for his aunt, the Czarina. These insinuations were partly successful, for Peter was sent to Oranienbaum, and his income was considerably reduced.

Elizabeth, while persecuting Peter, took good care of his wife, and commanded her mother, a very intriguing lady, to leave St. Petersburg ; then she sent Catherine a very characteristic ordinance, in which it was distinctly said that "we were pleased to call the Duchess for wife of our beloved Nephew, for we trusted that her high gifts would attach him to her and would assure our dear country an orthodox Czarevitch, and to give our Imperial house a worthy heir." This meant that should Catherine's sterility continue she was threatened with a divorce.

In the meanwhile events made Catherine's situation very critical. She was impressive, young, healthy, and was living at the Court, which, although it aped Versailles, did not even pretend to conceal passions. The Czarina Elizabeth stood as example to everybody. She prayed, drank, and led such a licentious life that it surpasses all imagination. Catherine had no aversion for vulgar pleasures, but the opportunity for indulgence had not yet arrived : she was short of a lover.

At last he was found in the person of Serge Saltykov, the Czarevitch's chamberlain. Saltykov was already famous as a conqueror of many hearts, and even he was a victim of love's enthusiasm, for Schuvalov sent him to Siberia to cool the ardour he showed towards *his* beloved.

Therefore Saltykov possessed a great charm

for Catherine. In course of time it was officially announced that Catherine was pregnant. Bestuzhev alone, while communicating this news to Elizabeth, was bold enough to say that the expected child must be accepted as legitimate, for this was required for State reasons. These indicated that Catherine, as well as the "substitute," should rather be rewarded than punished for their intrigue to continue the dynasty, in consequence of which they assured the monarchy long years of peace. That deep, historical reasoning was accepted by Elizabeth, and a hundred cannons were fired over the cradle of Catherine's son, who was christened Paul.

The Czarina Elizabeth, either because of her great love to her grandson, or wishing to have the baby under her immediate influence, kept him constantly in her apartments. That forced separation from her son Catherine bore better than the sudden departure of her lover Saltykov. While Peter avoided his wife, Saltykov persevered in his sentiment towards her. The perspicacious Bestuzhev, however, who was building on Catherine for a *coup d'état*, came to the conclusion that Saltykov, should he continue to be her lover, would be a dangerous competitor for her favours. He represented to the Czarina that it was necessary to send away the lover of the Princess, and accordingly Saltykov was sent to Stockholm, as an extraordinary envoy, with news of Paul's birth. Before Saltykov could return from his mission he was commanded to go to Hamburg, and to remain there in the position of ambassador.

Paul, who actually was the parent of following Czars, had still less right than his nominal father to be called a Romanov. Peter III., Duke of Holstein-Gottorp, should have called himself simply Bruhmer, while Paul was neither Holstein-Gottorp nor Bruhmer, but Saltykov.

Catherine's pregnancy coincided with that of Elizabeth, and this made some people believe that Paul was the son of the Czarina and not of the wife of the Czarevitch. It is said, also, that a girl was born, and that a boy was substituted. All these conjectures are probable, for even the fragments of the history of the Russian Court suffice to prove that the boldest fancy of a novelist could not be as dreadful as the truth. The majority of historians maintain that there is no doubt that Saltykov was Paul's father, although the wretchedness of soul and body both of Peter III. and Paul makes the supposition of some others logical, that Saltykov could not have been Paul's father. This supposition is also justified by Catherine's conduct. The disease from which Paul suffered, indicating that his father was probably a drunkard and a dissolute man, serves as an argument that Paul was a substituted child of Elizabeth's. The supposition is further justified by the Czarina's conduct towards the child. Her care of it bordered upon madness. Paul, while an infant, was compelled to be present during all Court festivities and receptions, and was not allowed to leave his official grandmother when Elizabeth was soiling her dignity as a ruler and as a woman by sensuality and profligacy. Catherine did not try to break down the barrier

which was erected between her and her child. The motherly sentiments were not strong enough to induce her to claim her rights. She was acknowledged to be the mother of an heir to the throne, she had fulfilled what they had asked her, and now she could return with more assurance to her love intrigues.

Saltykov was replaced successfully by Poniatowski, consequently in regard to her love affairs she could not complain; but she could not say the same about political intrigues, for her faithful ally, Bestuzhev, was in disgrace. His fall was brought about by Peter, who hated him for his anti-Prussian politics and for facilitating Poniatowski's relations with Catherine. Bestuzhev was succeeded by Woroncov, who had two nieces. The new Chancellor wished to realise the plans of Menshikov, of Biren, and of Dolgoruki, and offered the girls to Peter, who, with very little thought, chose the plainest and the most stupid, Elizabeth, and began to flirt with her openly.

The Czarina laughed at Peter's love intrigue, and listened attentively to stories told at Court about him and his wife. Catherine's amours with Poniatowski amused rather than angered her. It even pleased her, for it convinced her that she was not the only one who was fond of licentiousness. The Czarina was now fifty years old, and addicted to excessive drinking. Woroncov was obliged to use tricks to get a signature from her.

Catherine was in disgrace; her husband drank as deeply as his aunt, enjoyed himself

with Elizabeth Woroncov, and drilled his soldiers in the Prussian way. He pushed his friendship with Frederick the Great so far that he would communicate to him military plans, and in that way frustrate all efforts, both of Russia and of Austria.

After Bestuzhev's downfall, Catherine's party was very weak, but it existed and acted, although timidly and cautiously. Thus Elizabeth learned that her nephew laughed at her habits, and that he contemplated relieving her of the burden of the crown. The Empress grew angry, and she resolved to make Paul her successor. But this resolution was not executed, because of Elizabeth's illness, which made rapid progress, for the Czarina believed in only two remedies, whiskey and prayer. If the latter could have manifested the miraculous effect of faith, this would have been done, undoubtedly, but not in the company of alcohol.

The Court was devoured by the fever of uncertainty. Two parties, one for Catherine and the other for Peter, were preparing to fight. Schuvalov was going to attack Peter's fondness for the Prussians, while Woroncov had ready a manifesto in which there were the questions of little Paul's father, of the infidelity of Peter's wife, of a divorce and matrimony with Elizabeth Woroncov.

In the meanwhile, the dying Czarina forbade her chamber to both Peter and Catherine, for she was afraid that they would poison her. The situation was very serious; there was almost a rebellion in the capital.

Then came into the Russian historical arena Panin, little Paul's tutor. It is easy to guess who Panin was, for in St. Petersburg the road to a career led through Elizabeth's chamber. Panin had not then reached a very brilliant position, for the Czarina wittily said of him, "Panin possesses only a promising exterior." He was ambitious, though perhaps not so much ambitious as frightened that he should lose his position in the new changes. Fear prompted him to act as a peacemaker between Peter and his wife.

Catherine accepted without hesitation the idea of reconciliation with her husband; she understood that for the time being it would make her position as the wife of the Czar more secure. As for Peter, he was not so eager for reconciliation, but with brutal frankness he stated that Catherine's fears were groundless, for although it was true that he had said he would marry Elizabeth Woroncov when Catherine died, he could not marry her yet, for Catherine was still alive.

Panin succeeded in breaking through the guards surrounding the Czarina's chamber, introduced Peter and Catherine to the dying Elizabeth, and arranged a comedy of transmission of power to Peter. The Czarina answered his questions with the death-rattle.

CHAPTER III

Why Elizabeth's reign is memorable—Peter III.'s father—Open hatred between Peter and his wife Catherine—Peter III. a good-hearted man, but a physical wreck—His admiration for the Prussians causes his downfall—The efforts of the Woroncovs' party—The Czar's discovery of Catherine's misconduct—Difficulties about the successor—Peter III. determines to appoint Ivan VI. as Czarevitch—Catherine's ally, the Princess Woroncov-Dashkov—A plot against Peter III.—The brothers Orlov and their career—Panin's objections—The Metropolitan of Novgorod joins the plot—Catherine II. proclaimed Czarina—Peter III. arrested and kept under guard—Sympathy of the Russians for Peter—The Orlovs' determination to get rid of him—Murder of the Czar—Fate of the Holstein Grenadiers.

PETER III. became autocrat in the January of 1762. During the twenty years of Elizabeth's reign the Russian people were oppressed and tyrannised by *souteneurs*. The nation was forced to give millions for the gilding of coronets for people raised to the highest honours, and for the exigencies of the Czarina's corruption. The Russian nation paid millions to bastards, was forced to kneel before them, to forget the respect due to sacred family ties, to bow to those whom it should have despised.

Elizabeth's reign is memorable in the history of legislation for the abolition of capital punishment. For the axe was substituted the knout, *katorga* (deportation to mines), and the pulling out of the tongue. The criminals, instead of dying within a few seconds, were obliged to

endure agony for months and years, to see their flesh coming off their bones. Never did greater barbarity wear more humanitarian clothes. Elizabeth was proud of that new law, and, in accordance with it, she sentenced Mme. Lapushkin, who plotted against her, to have her tongue pulled out and to receive five hundred blows with the knout, of which three hundred were given to the dead body of the unfortunate courtier.

Elizabeth's reign convinced the Russians that they could not obtain justice from their rulers, that neither Divine nor human laws would be respected by them. The Russians looked at the walls of Schlüsselburg, where the unfortunate Czar Ivan VI. was doing penance for his only fault—that of being born with rights to the throne; the Russians knew who Peter III. was and whose son Paul was. They moaned, for as a historian says: "Bribery and corruption of officials became a plague." However, this was not the end of the system inaugurated by Peter the Great; political murders were not stopped, for Russia was rolling towards the precipice.

The good understanding between Peter III. and Catherine lasted only as long as they were busy with their installation, and then intriguing changed into open hatred. The Czar started his reign by introducing some good, honest, and useful reforms, but only such as a half-mad man would conceive them. Undoubtedly Peter III. was by nature a good-hearted man, apt to be a very liberal ruler, but a physical wreck. He was corrupted by his aunt, misguided and made stupid

by his flatterers. The abolition of the secret bureau, the exemption of the nobles from compulsory military service, and permission to go abroad, the release of thousands of political prisoners from jails and Siberia, produced in Russia an enthusiasm which, however, did not last long, for it was quenched by Catherine.

Peter III. was a German, and Catherine was also German born. The Czar was not clever and could not conceal his sympathy for Frederick the Great and for everything that was German. He boasted openly of being a Protestant; Catherine was a hypocrite but she pretended to be enthusiastic about the Greek Church, and ostentatiously attended public prayers; in that way she aroused in the orthodox clergy hopes that they would get back their former influence, and captivated them as well as those who had a patriotic disposition. Agitation spread quickly, for Peter III. was continually hurting the feelings of the Russians with his sympathy for the Prussians, so much so that his humanitarian tendencies were not sufficient to win the hearts of the people.

The Woroncovs' party, when Peter III. ascended the throne, determined to remove Catherine and her son Paul. The Czar, who until that time was ignorant as to Paul's real progenitor, was then told everything by his mistress Woroncov. Saltykov was summoned to come from Hamburg; they promised him millions, and obtained from him a document in which he claimed to be Paul's father. It was then resolved that Peter's unfaithful wife

should be removed to a monastery. Meanwhile, Catherine, retired from Court, was living in Peterhof with her son—consoled by Strogonov after Poniatowski's departure.

The Woroncovs' plot matured, and would have been carried out if it had not been for the difficulty that Peter, in removing Paul from the throne, would be obliged to give the monarchy another successor. This was a great difficulty, which even marriage with Elizabeth Woroncov could not have removed, for the Czar had convinced himself of his impotence.

Ivan VI., dethroned by Elizabeth, and kept in Schlüsselburg, saved the situation. Peter III. resolved to proclaim Ivan VI. as his successor. He visited him in Schlüsselburg, told him to be hopeful, ordered that the poor prisoner should be treated better, and waited for a suitable opportunity. Catherine, in the meantime, was vigilant. It happened that her most zealous ally was the Princess Woroncov-Dashkov, sister of Peter's mistress. It would be difficult to find out why she acted against her family's interest, whether from jealousy of her sister's influence, or from anger because she was rejected by Peter ; it suffices, however, that she was the most active in intriguing for Catherine. Panin, Cyryl Razumowski (brother of Elizabeth's morganatic husband), Wolkonski, an adventurer named Odart (lover of the Princess Woroncov-Dashkov), and Villebois (son of the admiral who was so daring towards Catherine I.) were united in the plot. It is doubtful whether the scheme would have been carried out successfully if it

had not been for the energy and daring of two such scoundrels as were the brothers Orlov, especially the elder, George.

George Orlov was the son of a private soldier whose head Peter I. condescended to chop off, and of whose progeny, by way of compensation, he took care. He was an unusually good-looking man, but this great advantage for a successful career in the Russian Court was nearly the cause of his downfall. Orlov was aide-de-camp to Peter Schuvalov, brother of Elizabeth's lover. Schuvalov had a love intrigue with Mme. Kurakin, who preferred her lover's aide-de-camp. Schuvalov did not like that, and sent his aide-de-camp to Siberia as he had formerly done with Saltykov. George Orlov returned to St. Petersburg when Peter III. granted a general pardon.

Catherine took an interest in Orlov's career, and played with him a comedy of the kind that became so common during her reign. Orlov was loved by a mysterious lady, and as he deserved a special favour from her, she told him to his delight, that she, the mother of his future child, was the Czarina. Orlov became a violent conspirator, and did not disdain any means to agitate openly in the army. The agitation alone would not have sufficed if it had not been for the money supplied by the foreign ambassadors, who wanted to get rid of Peter III. and his sympathy for Prussia.

The plot, or rather counterplot, was almost ripe, when two events nearly ruined everything. In the first place, Panin, although he was against Peter III., wanted Paul to be proclaimed Czar

and his mother appointed Regent. He energetically opposed Catherine's accession to the throne, on the ground that she was German, and had not a drop of Russian blood in her veins. Catherine succeeded in winning him by a promise that he should be appointed Prime Minister. The second incident was, perchance, more grave. Catherine was pregnant by Orlov. This she succeeded in concealing from her husband until she was near confinement. But Peter was informed of everything, and rushed to Peterhof to punish his unfaithful wife. The Czarina was notified of his arrival about an hour after she gave birth to a little Orlov, the future Prince Bobrynski. A sword was hanging over the head of the conspirators, but Catherine did not hesitate. She dominated her sufferings and, smiling, went to meet Peter, expressing her surprise at his arrival. Peter allowed himself to be fooled again.

The Princess Woroncov-Dashkov doubled her efforts and induced the Metropolitan of Novgorod to join the plotters. His intention was to give his blessing to the murderers, amongst whom was his own son. The conspirators were still undecided, when the sudden arrest of one of them prompted the others to act. One of the bribed soldiers of the guards said boldly that there was no Czar. An officer, who was not in the plot, questioned the soldier, and acting upon his avowal arrested one of the intriguers.

Peter III. was in Oranienbaum ; consequently the further investigation was postponed till the next day ; but one night was sufficient for the conspirators. Catherine, helped by Orlov and

his brothers, succeeded in escaping from Peterhof and reaching St. Petersburg. Here the conspirators won over the guards by telling them that the Czar had ordered the murder of the Czarina and the Czarevitch, the oppression of the orthodox faith, and everything that was Russian. The plot was organised so well that before Peter III. had learned about it, Catherine II. was already anointed by the Metropolitan as Czarina. She distributed orders, favours, and donations; held a review of the guards; and even had time to notice that a young officer, by name Potemkin, was more handsome than Orlov.

Peter III. was so frightened that he had not enough energy to run away, still less to think of resistance. He was easily arrested. The plotters obtained from him a signed statement about his impotency, forced him to abdicate, and refused to listen to his entreaties to be allowed to return to Holstein. Having imprisoned Peter III., they spread the news of his death, and even organised an ostensible burial of his supposed remains. Soon, however, that news was contradicted by an eye-witness.

Almost simultaneously with the change of ruler there came regret. Many of the conspirators were jealous of Orlov, who became a recognised lover and did not conceal his ambitious plans. The Russian people were at first indignant with Peter III. for his proposed murder of Paul and Catherine, but learning the truth, regretted their acclamation of the Czarina. Then Moscow openly manifested its sympathy for Peter III., while the most indifferent agreed that two Czars

in prison—Ivan VI. and Peter III.—“was too much,” even for Russia.

The conspirators, or, rather, their principal representative, George Orlov, determined to quell the movement in favour of Peter by removing the object of it. Orlov had four brothers, and one of them, Alexis, who also enjoyed the Czarina's favours, accepted the “mission,” with the help of Tieplov, the Metropolitan's son, and the young Prince Bariatynski.

Peter III. was kept under guard in so-called Roshcha, near St. Petersburg, where he was allowed to have one French valet. One can imagine how glad the imprisoned Czar was when he beheld Orlov and Tieplov, who told him solemnly that he would be released and allowed to return to Holstein. The assassins were very respectful towards the Czar, and went as far as to order a sumptuous supper to be served in the prison. The Czar enjoyed the good dishes. He complained timidly that he was deprived even of simple food, that he and his servant had had no bread. Tieplov was able to smooth the Czar's grievances by an interesting conversation, while Orlov filled up the glasses. Suddenly Peter, having drunk scarcely half of the contents of a glass that was handed to him, threw it away, for the wine was so bitter that he trembled all over and cried, “I am poisoned!” With these words he rushed to the door, but Orlov pushed him brutally to the centre of the room, shouting :

“Drink what is given to you! You must drink!”

"To the Czarina's health!" insisted Tieplov cynically, handing him another poisoned drink.

"Milk! Give me milk! They have poisoned me!" shouted Peter, feeling the poison, although swallowed in a small quantity, begin to act.

Attracted by the noise, the French valet rushed into the room, but he was followed by Bariatynski, who stunned him with a blow and locked him up in another room. A struggle for life began. Orlov, like a mad beast, rushed on the Czar, overthrew him, and pressed him down with his knees. In the meantime Bariatynski and Tieplov put a napkin round his neck and strangled him.

Peter III., the Czar and absolute ruler of all the Russias, was dead.

Orlov jumped on horseback and rode as fast as he could to St. Petersburg to impart the good news to Catherine. The Czarina was moved by Orlov's devotion to her. Panin was summoned for advice. On the following day the Russian people read a lachrymosely sentimental manifesto, full of dignity, by which the Czarina communicated to her people the sad news, "that it pleased God to call to Him our well-beloved consort": "we call all our faithful subjects to unite their prayers with ours," and similar phrases garnished this precious announcement.

The people read with awe and indignation the blasphemous words of a murderess, who, in the meanwhile, busied herself about every detail of the funeral of the unfortunate Czar. It was worth while to bury him with magnificence, for

with him there disappeared the head of a party, a leader of rebellion. But the solemnities of Peter's funeral were disturbed. The strangled Czar had in his favourite Oranienbaum a regiment of Holstein grenadiers, who were much attached to him because of the great care he had shown for them, and to whom his death was a great blow. Consequently, when those honest soldiers were commanded to take part in the funeral, they gave vent to their grief, together with their gratitude, in abundant tears, complaints, and expressions of doubt as to the natural death of their master. Hence new conjectures and greater indignation arose amongst the people.

The Czarina punished the soldiers by ordering that they should be sent back to Holstein. This, however, was done in a strange way. The soldiers were embarked for Cronstadt, but as soon as the vessel was out at sea it began to sink. A boat was lowered, and the crew of the ship put into port for help. The admiral refused it, and forbade anything to be done for the sinking vessel till permission came from St. Petersburg authorising it. Not one of the Holstein grenadiers returned to his fatherland.

On the other hand, Catherine knew how to be grateful, and showered gold, orders, and honours on the conspirators, especially on the brothers Orlov, Bariatynski, and Tieplov, all of them brilliant stars of Catherine the Great.

Assassinations in Russia were not ended with Peter III., nor was Catherine stayed from further murders. From every corner of the Imperial palaces, one could expect the thrust of

a dagger : in every room there were ghosts with ropes round their necks, frightening all those who held the Russian sceptre ; corpses of the murdered Czars, who were yet to fill up numerous coffins ; and their curses were hanging over the Imperial two-headed eagle.

Even to-day, after a hundred and forty years, not one historian living in Russia dares to say that Peter III. was murdered by his wife's order, and that his murderers got all their riches and distinction as a reward for his death ; that if Bariatynski had not had enough pluck, Catherine never would have married him to a Duchess of Holstein ; and that had Peter III. been less credulous the same official Russian history would have been indignant at those who, as it stands, are praised and glorified.

It is true that to make an attempt on a Russian ruler's life and not to succeed stamps the ignominious author of the failure, in the official history, as a scoundrel, who thereby becomes miserable dirt, instead of an ornament of the Russian sceptre, a diamond of diamonds, in brief an Orlov.

However, the year 1762 was a turning point in the history of Russia, for in that year began a reign during which conspiracy passed from the throne to the people at large, and during which attempts to murder rulers were started at the opposite pole.

CHAPTER IV

Agitation against Catherine and Orlov—Numerous conspiracies—Political prisoners starved to death at Orlov's suggestion—Agitations in favour of Ivan VI., who was kept prisoner in Schlüsselburg—Captain Mirovich used as a tool for murdering Ivan VI.—Why Mirovich was beheaded—Catherine's sentimental correspondence with Voltaire—Orlov's ambitious plans to become Catherine's husband frustrated by Panin—Orlov intriguing against Paul—The Czarevitch's amours with the Princess Czartoryska.

THE murder of Peter III. did not stop the agitation ; it simply gave it another direction.

Catherine's former partisans turned against her and began to plot. Among those who were dissatisfied were Razumowski and the Metropolitan of Novgorod, followed by the whole orthodox clergy. These were disappointed with the Czarina, who had sworn to give them back their former privileges and independence, in order to win them to her side ; but as soon as she was raised to the throne she dropped all intention of fulfilling her promises. The clergy began to agitate against her, and when Catherine came to Moscow she was welcomed by a dead silence. In the meanwhile, thousands of copies of a manifesto were distributed among the people. This manifesto was an exact copy of a proclamation prepared by Peter III. This document, left by the murdered Czar, who stigmatised Catherine's licentious life, proved that Paul was an illegitimate child, and turned the

eyes of the nation towards Ivan VI. as the only legitimate heir to the throne of all the Russias. Numberless arrests, sentences to exile in Siberia, and knouting did not stop the distribution of the pamphlet.

Catherine realised the danger. Orlov was watchful, but was not able to prevent numerous plots against the Czarina. The attempts on the life of Catherine and Orlov were so frequent in Moscow that they were frightened and fled to St. Petersburg. The same day they were burnt in effigy in the Kremlin Square.

As soon as Catherine reached St. Petersburg a very bold plot was discovered against her amongst the guards. The arrests were so numerous that the prisons were filled to their utmost capacity, and as Catherine feared to institute any proceedings against the prisoners, at Orlov's suggestion they were simply starved to death.

The purpose of all these plots and agitations was to enthrone Ivan VI., who had not the faintest idea of what was going on in his favour. He was proclaimed Czar by his aunt Anna, and deprived of the throne by Elizabeth when he was but an infant. Up to eight years of age he was kept in prison, together with his parents, the Duke and Duchess of Brunswick, at which age he was separated from them.

Ivan VI. was brought up in prison and left at the mercy of his warders, one of whom, having nothing else to do, taught him to read and write ; but beyond that nobody cared about him. The only bright moment in his life was when Peter III. visited him in his prison and gave

him a little château near St. Petersburg. As soon as Catherine became Czarina, Ivan's freedom ended; he was arrested and put in Schlüsselburg fortress, where he was kept closer than ever. Poor Ivan was so accustomed to prison life that he was not able even to complain of his hard lot, and he did not dream that outside Schlüsselburg thousands of people were risking their lives for his liberation.

This martyr, however, was an obstacle to Catherine, who knew well that as long as he was alive her position on the throne was insecure. Ivan VI. was therefore condemned to die. This sentence was executed with such perfidy that Catherine revealed herself a monster of depravity, who could give lessons even to a Borgia.

In Schlüsselburg the Smolensk regiment was garrisoned; in that regiment there served a certain Vasil Mirovich, with the rank of captain, whose grandfather was beheaded by Peter I. and his estate confiscated. The grandson determined to take advantage of his military rank and social connections in order to obtain the restitution of his grandfather's estate. Naturally, Mirovich's efforts were directed towards winning the goodwill of the Orlovs, for only through their influence could he expect to obtain the Czarina's propitious answer. Mirovich's endeavours were long futile, but at last he received a favourable, although a conditional, promise. Catherine was inclined to restore the captain's estate provided he would give her proofs of his devotion to the throne. This condition was enthusiastically accepted by Mirovich, who said

he was ready to do anything he was asked. He was soon told what was expected from him.

Mirovich began his task with absolute faith and perfect self-denial. First the (until then) loyal officer of the Smolensk regiment became a conspirator in favour of the Czar Ivan VI. To the great surprise of his comrades, Mirovich told them that he was going to free Ivan VI. in order to put him on the throne and in that way to secure his gratitude, which would become a source of favours for ever.

Mirovich's self-assurance and boldness, backed up by a document issued by the Senate authorising him to act, and still more by the money with which the penniless captain had been supplied, secured him a number of followers. The plan of freeing Ivan VI. was matured in a few days, for Mirovich supervised its execution personally.

Ivan VI. was guarded in Schlüsselburg day and night by twelve grenadiers of the guard, commanded by two officers sent from St. Petersburg shortly before the attempt was made, with an order to remain with the Czar in the same room continually in case he should try to escape. Or if an attempt was made to free him, they were to kill him. Of this order, signed by the Czarina, nobody in Schlüsselburg knew anything except the two officers.

Mirovich did not lose time, and, heading fifty men, went one night towards Ivan's prison. The sentinels, having been bribed, made no resistance; the commandant of the fortress alone, roused by the noise, tried, but without success, to persuade Mirovich to give up his

design. The grenadiers guarding the entrance to the prison resisted the captain and fired on him and his men, but without effect, their cartridges being blank. The conspirators were now separated from Ivan only by the door, bolted inside by the two officers who were with the prisoner in his cell.

Mirovich threw himself first against the door, and was seconded by his men, but it was an iron one and not easy to force. It took some time for the conspirators to accomplish their task, and they had nearly succeeded when it was suddenly opened, revealing to their eyes an unexpected sight. In the centre of the room lay the still quivering body of Ivan, bathed in blood. The two officers held in their blood-stained hands the Czarina's order.

The conspirators were dumb with horror. Their first thought was to avenge Ivan's death, but when they turned to their leader, he made a movement with his hand and, smiling, handed his sword to the commandant of the fortress. His followers were arrested without any resistance.

That same night the news was sent to St. Petersburg, but the Czarina was not there. Catherine had nothing to do with the crime; therefore, without any reason, she went, just before Ivan's murder, to Riga, where she was wondering why the messengers were so slow in bringing her news. In Catherine's absence Panin, seemingly wondering at the meaning of the Senate's order found on Mirovich, gave instructions for the investigation of the affair and the punishment of the culprit.



IVAN VI.

The news of Ivan's murder aroused the people, who rushed to Schlüsselburg to pay a last homage to the unfortunate Czar. However, Panin and Catherine, full of indignation, returned from Riga to the capital, and decided that the burial of the Czar should be the simplest possible. They ordered that Ivan's body be wrapped up in a sheepskin coat and deposited in the moat of the fortress. Angry crowds wished to turn against the two murderers, but could not find them, for the prudent officers deemed it proper to travel in Denmark, where they were protected by the Russian ambassador.

For the time being, Mirovich's behaviour was most puzzling and strange. Never before had a judge less trouble with a prisoner. Mirovich, full of assurance, quietly told all about the conspiracy, repeated the arguments with which he induced his comrades to join him, gave their names, and even smiled when his death sentence was read to him. The judges dared not fathom the reasons of his self-assurance; and his accomplices were under his persuasive influence, being told by him that not a hair of their heads should be hurt.

Mirovich's self-assurance did not leave him even when he was standing on the scaffold, although a sharp observer could have noticed that the captain looked impatiently in the direction from which he expected a *feldjeger* galloping with the Czarina's pardon, which was going to be the end of a well-played comedy. Those in authority, however, had come to the conclusion that Mirovich was a bad actor, for he was

too frank, and permitted the spectators to look too closely at his artifices as a conspirator. They decided that the comedy should be changed into a drama, and for this Mirovich should die.

The executioner, also believing firmly that he would not be obliged to raise his axe and take such a precious life as that of the captain of the Smolensk regiment, waited and looked round till at length he was obliged to perform his task.

Mirovich was condemned for the crime of having carried out Catherine's order, and was executed because she wished to prove to the Russians that he was really the culprit. However, if Mirovich's death, showing the Czarina's perfidy, does not arouse our sympathy for her paid myrmidon, who knew well that he was a tool used to conceal a planned-out murder, the lot of his fifty followers, deceived by Mirovich, and who had neither enthusiasm for Ivan VI. nor hatred for Catherine, deserves the deepest commiseration. They were knouted, each receiving from two hundred blows upwards; those who survived the punishment were sent to Siberia.

The effect, however, was something incomprehensible. Ivan's murder, planned so masterfully, staged so well, did not deceive anyone; the Russian people did not hesitate to point at the true culprit. They shivered with fear, for they felt that Catherine would go further on her iniquitous road.

The Czarina read the accusation in the eyes of her people and was frightened—a little. On the list of those who were doomed to follow Ivan

were his parents, kept in prison with their four children born there. Catherine, however, magnanimously allowed the Duke of Brunswick and his wife to die in gaol, while their children were exiled to Archangel. This despatching of the pretenders to the Russian throne did not prevent the perfidious Czarina from corresponding with Voltaire and complaining of the burden of her responsibilities, and expressing her longing for a superior life, free from the sorrows of a ruler and from shallow flatteries.

Voltaire, dazzled by the great Czarina's good-heartedness, intelligence, and munificence, burnt incense to her, regretting that he was not the subject of "the best amongst the wisest rulers." Voltaire was not aware of the lot of which he complained, because his work kept him far from the Czarina, and prevented him from being, perchance, knouted and sent to Siberia.

The Czarina grew sentimental when writing to Voltaire, while Paul, the little successor to the throne, would ask her naïvely, "Why have you killed my father?" Ivan the Terrible or Peter the Great would have answered such a question. Catherine would have done so too if she had not been afraid, for Paul was the only pretext by which she—an alien by birth, religion, and spirit—could be seated on the Russian throne; and she was well aware that should she cause Paul's death she would certainly be killed.

Over Paul's head, however, there gathered dark clouds, even without those of his mother's making. Paul was a weakling, depraved by Elizabeth and her Court. The slightest indis-

position was very serious for him. It is true that he, as heir apparent, was in the hands of a very clever physician, Dr. Krauze, who was appointed to that post by Orlov as a reward for the poison furnished to him for Peter III., but even Krauze could not save Paul from illness.

George Orlov, who occupied the post of the Czarina's first lover, and who was often obliged to shut his eyes to her various love intrigues, began to think seriously how to make his position secure. It was a very simple affair: he must marry Catherine, become at least the prince consort, and then make his son, who until then was called Vasil Bobrynski, the successor to the throne.

Catherine was apparently in favour of Orlov's ambitious plans, for she obtained for him the title of prince from Maria Theresa, by which the Czarina wished to show to the Russians that Orlov's great qualities were also highly appreciated by foreign sovereigns as well as by herself. However, the watchful and cunning Panin was able to frustrate the new prince's matrimonial plans. It was not a difficult task, for the Czarina was very fond of her independence.

Orlov, disappointed in his matrimonial affairs, adhered still more strongly to his plan of putting his son on the throne; this time, however, he was more cautious with his intriguing.

Catherine did not love Paul; she merely suffered him for the sake of keeping up appearances. Orlov endeavoured to his utmost power to make the Czarina hate Paul, but as the boy's sweet disposition was the greatest obstacle to the

realisation of his design, he changed his plan and began to corrupt still more the already corrupted boy ; and he did it to such effect that the thirteen-year-old boy had a love intrigue with a lady of the Court, by name Viera Shcheyoloff. Catherine was very much amused by this incident, but when Orlov drew the conclusion from Paul's premature corruption that the future Czar would be sterile and die prematurely, and that consequently there would be more fighting for the Russian throne, the Czarina guessed her lover's aim and determined to verify the truth of his surmise and act according to the results.

The trial which Paul had to undergo was profoundly cynical. Amongst the ladies of the Court there was the young widow of Prince Michael Czartoryski ; she was but twenty years old, beautiful, looking for another husband, and in the meantime not disdainful of a love intrigue. The Czarina came to an understanding with the lovely widow as to the education of Paul, then fourteen years old.

The result of the Princess Czartoryski's tutelage, naturally strictly controlled by the Czarina, was the birth of the so-called Semen Veliki, Paul's son. Having obtained satisfactory results, the Czarina determined to end once for all Orlov's ambitious intriguing ; for Catherine, notwithstanding she loved her son Bobrynski, offspring of her connection with Orlov, notwithstanding that she was aware of Paul's physical and moral inferiority, she could not avow to the world that she was twice unfaithful to Peter III. She could not confirm the truth of Peter's manifesto

—in which he called the Czarevitch Saltykoff. She could not boast either that she also became Bobrynski's mother while her husband was alive. Such a magnitude of depravity even the Russians could not stand, especially when they were rising against her.

The rebuff did not mean that Orlov gave up all hope. He was not lacking in energy and daring; consequently, it was not without reason that Paul complained that he found pieces of broken glass in the pastry given to him. It was not without reason that he naïvely asked Dr. Krauze whether he was going to poison him also. The only means to preserve Paul's life from violence, and destroy for ever Orlov's intriguing, was to find a wife for the Czarevitch as soon as possible, and thus get the dynasty continued.

The choice fell on the Princess Wilhelmina of Darmstadt, who seemed to Catherine likely to become a passive tool in her able hands. The Princess embraced the orthodox faith, and, under the name of Natalia Alexiejevna, became Paul's wife. The couple seemed to be very well matched.

The Czarina breathed easily, for after ten years of fierce fighting with competitors, conspirators, and intriguers, who all wished to wrench from her the supreme power, she would at last be seated safely on the throne so easily shaken.

CHAPTER V

What was Pugachevshchizna ?—Characteristics of the Russian peasant—his love for the Czar and hatred for officials—Peter III. resuscitated—Who was Pugachev ?—Panin's plot against Catherine—Paul a victim of it—Sudden death of his wife—Catherine a murderess for the third time—Paul married again—Nelidov his mistress and Kutaisoff his friend—Orlov's most abominable crime—The Zuboffs and their influence over Catherine—Courtiers' surmises and an amusing story about the Mamonoffs—Russia's forced civilisation.

THE year 1773 brought to the Czarina a surprise which shook the foundations, not only of her throne, but of the whole Russian empire, for it was the year of Pugachevshchizna. It was nothing new in Russia, but it was not observed in other parts of Europe. Russia's backbone is its peasants. They are poor ; but, notwithstanding that, they are robbed by officials and priests ; they are half savage, but not stupid, and they try hard to better their miserable lot. Such was the Russian peasant then, and such he has remained until the present time.

Through centuries the Russian peasant has preserved in his traditions the reminiscence of better times, when there were neither lords, nor priests, nor officials. In Catherine's reign he was nearer to those times which brought changes in his existence. It was Peter I. who gave the Russian peasant into serfdom, and Catherine, "the star of the North," extended this serfdom

to landless servants, to the Small Russia, where serfdom did not exist, and even to provinces taken from Poland, giving to the masters the right not only to flog their serfs, but also to send them to hard labour in Siberia.

The Russian peasant thought slowly, as is his habit, and came to the kernel of his philosophy, "God is high and the Czar is far"; and that immediately over him there was lord-oppressor, priest-thief, and official-robber. The "white Czar," who appears to him from time to time in golden clothes, smiling to him benevolently, scattering silver money, and supplying him with whiskey during festivities, has nothing in common with cruelty. As the merciful God has nothing in common with the constantly drunken Russian priest, in the same way the righteous Czar has nothing in common with thieving officials. The Russian peasant places the blame of his hard lot on those who stand between him and the merciful God and the benevolent Czar. The priest cheats the peasant and takes his last penny, for he does not explain to God the sorrows of the sons of toil; while the official vilifies the peasant to the Czar. However, it is not proper that God and the Czar should be in direct communication with the peasant, hence the necessity of employing intermediaries, and hence peasant troubles.

It is impossible to disentangle such a skein. The Russian peasant suffers, and is silent; but it is not difficult to understand his psychological state, when into some remote corner of the country there comes to him the news about the

murder of "the Czar-father," and especially when such news is disguised in most fantastic garb. The Russian peasant's thoughts must be still more disturbed, and his feelings still more aroused, when after a certain lapse of time there reaches him news that the good-hearted, the best, and the most benevolent Czar, who was murdered "for nothing," has risen and is coming to his people, to seek amongst them protection against lords, priests, and officials; to do the peasants justice, to restore to one his stolen calf, to give to another some plaister for healing the wounds made by hard flogging, and so on.

The cry "For the Czar!" arouses the peasants from their usual apathy, makes them catch hold of poles and of burning pieces of wood, and burst out like an element which can be quenched only by a sea of blood. Such an element is called in Russia "Pugachevshchizna," and has nothing to do with the French "Jacquerie." That element caused the Russian peasants to revolt more than a hundred years before Catherine's reign in favour of the alleged resuscitated Czar Dimitri, and gave to Russia two Czars-pretenders. This time there arose a third, and his name was Pugachev.

Interpreted by the Russian peasants, the murder of Peter became a fantastic story, in the first place on account of his symbolic—if one may say so—burial, arranged on the first day of the attempt on his life; secondly, the subsequent burial bred misgiving in the minds of the people. Further, Peter's manifesto, made popular by the priests, constituted a large field

for the play of the imagination, while the Czar's sudden death could have been taken for a rumour, hiding the imprisoned Czar's escape, the purpose of which rumour might have been to make the people forget Peter III., whether still a prisoner or wandering at large. Then a certain kind of uneasiness amongst the people, and war and pestilence produced an atmosphere favourable to the most fantastic reports.

Thus, towards the end of 1774, Peter III., resuscitated, appeared in the extreme east of Russia and issued to the people a proclamation, written in golden letters. The peasants followed the Czar-avenger, the Czar-saviour, the Czar-martyr. Pugachev, a Cossack, half-soldier, half-robber, claimed to be Peter III.

Pugachev was courageous and enterprising. He knew how to reach the Russian peasants' most painful wrongs. He was able enough to surround himself with the halo of a divine messenger. He could attract to himself not only Christians, but also heathens, and in addition to all that he bore a striking likeness to Peter III. The revolt soon changed into an insurrection. St. Petersburg trembled. Several thousand Cossacks sent against the rebels joined Pugachev, who marched against Moscow and captured a fortress. Catherine's generals were defeated one after the other, and towards the Neva flew the ominous news: "The Czar Peter III. is coming; the truth is coming!"

Pugachev advanced, marking his halting-places with numerous gallows, on which were hanged lords, officials, and priests. Only after

a year was Catherine able to gather an army to defeat Pugachev. Then she needed nearly a year in which to use bribery and treason in order to reach Pugachev and cut down his almost numberless followers.

Pugachev, put in an iron cage, like a wild beast, was frightfully tortured, and then cut to pieces. He died, but his spirit remained amongst the Russian peasants, together with a deep conviction not only that the White Czar and the mother-Czarina are sometimes victims of assassins, but also that they are sometimes murderers.

Pugachevshchizna made a deep impression throughout the whole Russian empire, but especially in St. Petersburg. It encouraged Catherine's secret foes.

This time a conspiracy was headed by Panin ! Panin did everything to preserve his influence over the Czarina ; he suggested to her new lovers. He would then defend her against them in case they were too exacting, but in the meanwhile he wished to persuade Catherine to invest the Senate with the supreme executive power. The Czarina, however, was too intelligent to be caught that way. Panin turned in another direction and found a staunch ally in the young wife of the successor to the throne.

Natalia was intelligent and courageous. In two years she mastered all the secrets of the Court, and out of spite towards Catherine, she surrounded herself with more honest people than were the Czarina's favourites. She won to her side such an influential man as Repnin, and

hatched a plot with Panin. The aim of it was to dethrone Catherine and to proclaim Paul the Czar of all the Russias.

Paul followed his wife's advice, for he loved her, and, full of the enthusiasm of youth, he signed a Constitution, drafted by Panin, and swore to it solemnly in the presence of the conspirators. The Russians did not suspect that they were near freedom. The Czarina did not dream that Paul would conspire against her. Besides, she was busy extinguishing the last sparks of Pugachev's rebellion, not to mention the absorbing occupation of making and keeping appointments with her numerous lovers.

Fate, however, decreed that one of the conspirators should desire some silver coins like Judas. The traitor went to Orlov to get them in exchange for the secret of the conspiracy. This time her opponents were of such great importance that Catherine was afraid.

Paul was summoned to appear before the Czarina, and after a short inquiry he was frightened into telling her everything. The Czarina, not daring to punish, forgave him, but did not give up her vengeance. Paul was sent away from the Court, but in order to prevent him from repenting of his submissiveness the Czarina sent to him the news that his wife had been false to him with his best friend Razumowski.

The blow was well directed. Paul became mad with jealousy, for he was much in love with his beautiful wife; now all cords were broken. But the Czarina was not satisfied yet. Natalia was a dangerous adversary: she might

take part in another plot, perhaps more successful than the first.

Natalia became suddenly ill, and all the symptoms of her illness indicated a premature confinement. After a few hours of great suffering she was delivered of a dead child ; a few hours later, when all danger seemed passed, she died. Her death appeared so natural that it would not have aroused anybody's suspicion if it had not been for the midwife who attended her. This woman, unknown at Court, became rich after Natalia's death ; she was friendly with Potemkin and Orlov, and on very good terms with the Czarina. After her *début* at Natalia's confinement, the midwife practised no more. It should be added that she was sent to Natalia by Catherine, and that history has left some proofs as to her guilt of Natalia's death, in the shape of confidences when she was drunk.

Thus Catherine was a murderess for the third time.

Natalia's death was but a short distraction in the life of the Russian Court ; undoubtedly of a lesser importance than the disgrace of Panin, whom the Czarina could no longer tolerate.

When Natalia died it was necessary to think about the continuation of the dynasty ; consequently to find a new wife for the heir-apparent. The long-sighted Czarina did not delay long. In the same year she threw into her son's arms the Duchess Sophia of Würtemberg, called afterwards Maria Theodorovna. This union was not happy, notwithstanding that Maria Theodorovna

possessed great beauty and was endowed with such great qualities of heart and mind that, probably, there was not another Princess in Russia who could be considered her rival in these respects. The Princess was an honest woman. She despised intrigues, hence her troubles. As for Paul, although a good-hearted man, he was nervous and constantly in fear of being assassinated. Besides, his heart was still bleeding, because his faith in Natalia's love and in Razumowski's friendship had been ruined.

The nearer his succession to the Russian throne the less he cared for Court or people. During the night he was fighting awful visions, during the day he was a prey to his sickly imagination; he was afraid to eat or to drink; he would not stay alone in a room; he suspected every servant to be his assassin. Paul was on the verge of madness.

His sufferings could have been easily alleviated by a sweet and submissive woman, such as Maria Theodorovna, but Catherine would not allow the couple to live happily. For this purpose she poured the poison of suspicion into Paul's mind immediately after his marriage with this second wife, and she renewed that poison continually.

Paul distrusted everybody. However, even such a weak-minded man was bound to find someone to whom he could speak about his hallucinations, fears, and grievances. Ivan Kutaisoff, a Turk slave, brought up in the Imperial stables, became the Czarevitch's confidant. This strange choice was brought about by Paul's reasoning that

his valet should be faithful and devoted through gratitude.

Paul's retired life, very much approved by the mother-Czarina, displeased the courtiers who were always eager for influence, especially those not fortunate enough to be related to some lover of the Czarina's, or who were dreaming of more durable influence under a new reign. Those courtiers strained all their faculties to stop Paul's solitary life, and at least to have near the Czarevitch somebody through whom they could do what they pleased with the future Czar. Kutaisoff, too stupid to understand his importance, was employed as a tool, and through him Mme. Nelidov became Paul's mistress. Why Nelidov? Why was Paul unfaithful to his lovely wife for an ugly, perverse, and stupid woman? This question will remain without an answer for ever if one be not satisfied with a surmise that everything that pleased the valet was also agreeable to the master.

Nelidov ruled, for Kutaisoff refused to do so; while Maria Theodorovna was doing everything an honest woman could to win back the love of an unfaithful husband. Maria Theodorovna was sad. She cried, she reproached her husband bitterly, and finally went to her mother-in-law for advice, help, and protection.

Catherine, in answer to her complaints, conducted her to a mirror and said, laughing: "Look how lovely you are and grudge not to that little monster of my son his ugly-looking Nelidov. You shall be victorious over her." The victory, however, was not so easy, and Maria Theo-

dorovna, wishing to win her husband back, was obliged to humiliate her dignity, to bend before her husband's mistress, and to make a compact with her.

The discord between Paul and Maria was a guarantee to Catherine that from this side she was not threatened by any danger. There was neither Ivan VI. nor Pugachev; the Russian conspirators had nobody in favour of whom they could plot. Up to this time the murderers of the Czars had been members of their families or courtiers plotting for someone who was connected by blood with the ruling family. As all plots and revolts were enterprises for the possession of the throne and not for the sake of the country and the people, so even Pugachev's rebellion, the dissatisfaction of priests and nobles, was originated in the egotistical motives of a class, and never reached the ideals of the whole nation. Consequently, when a pretender was despatched to the other world, the conspiracy, deprived of its watchword, was bound to collapse.

Catherine was triumphant. She had murdered two Czars and a wife of the successor to the throne, and still remained supreme. Fate, however, prepared a surprise even for such a long-sighted woman as Catherine.

Elizabeth had three children by a private tutor, Alexis Razumowski. One of those children, under the name of the Princess Tarakanoff, was living in St. Petersburg, when the Prince Charles Radziwill determined to be revenged on Catherine for her unjust division of Poland. For such a powerful lord as Radziwill even the



CATHERINE II.

abduction of a princess was a trifle, and she was conducted to Rome, where he ordered his servants to give her the best education, teaching her everything pertaining to Russia, and especially the intimate history of its rulers.

It is not difficult to understand Radziwill's plan. The Princess, notwithstanding that she was an illegitimate child, was undoubtedly Elizabeth's daughter, a fact which sufficed to arouse in her the consciousness of her importance and the desire to rule, if and when an opportune moment should produce a new Pugachevshchizna.

The Czarina avenged herself on Radziwill by confiscating his enormous estates. The Polish magnate resisted such an illegal act, but was obliged to compromise: he left the Princess Tarakanoff to her fate in Rome, for which he got back his estates.

To deprive the Princess of Radziwill's protection was only the beginning of the Czarina's hostilities. Elizabeth's daughter was very beautiful, and during the five years of her residence in Rome she became well educated. Consequently, she was dangerous, for she could gather round her the knights-errant as well as Catherine's foes, and thus cause serious trouble. Catherine was aware of the danger, and resolved to remove it. The task was difficult. Rome was far from St. Petersburg, and the Czarina could not there do anything she pleased as she could in her own capital. However, Alexis Orlov, murderer of Peter III. and Catherine's lover in succession to his brother, did not hesitate to risk even his life

when the iniquity he was going to commit was to the liking of his savage instincts.

Orlov's expedition to Italy, his acquaintance with the Princess Tarakanoff, his pretended love for her, the comedy played by him to win her, followed by a wedding that astonished the whole of Italy by its magnificence, and afterwards an excursion on board a Russian ship, where the Princess was chained the moment she put her foot on deck, is something so fantastical that it surpasses the boldest imagination of a sensational novelist.

In some corner of the diplomatic archives of Vienna and St. Petersburg one could, perhaps, find some protests written by Leopold, Duke of Tuscany, but they are the only expression of censure and indignation at Orlov's most infamous deed.

The Princess was taken to St. Petersburg imprisoned at the bottom of the ship, from which place she was dragged twice during the voyage to the feet of the drunken Orlov. In St. Petersburg the Princess was put in a dungeon in the fortress, where she suffered for several years, until the Neva took pity on her, rose higher than the window of the cell in which the Czarina had immured her, and drowned Elizabeth's unhappy daughter.

What said Europe to that?

Europe towards the end of the eighteenth century could close her eyes and stop her ears as she does in the twentieth century. Europe knew everything. Sometimes she sympathised, but did nothing except pile up paper used by

the secretaries of the Embassies. One could not expect much from Europe in the eighteenth century, for in every capital there were plenty of intrigues, iniquities, and murders: the volcano of the French Revolution had just then begun to belch.

Catherine grew old, but she did not give up her amours. The number of her lovers was so great that it is difficult to believe she could have had so many. The last admirers of the Czarina's withered charms were Platon Zuboff and, in a subordinate position, his brother Valerian. Catherine was then sixty-two years old, while Platon Zuboff was but twenty-four and his brother twenty. Catherine had grown-up and married grand-children, but this did not prevent her from being in love with Zuboff, in whose affection she believed to the last moment of her life; while he, with the impudence of a *souteneur*, grabbed everything he could lay his hands upon. The Czarina's last lovers acquired as much riches in a few months as Potemkin and Orlov had during years. Platon Zuboff, in the second year of his masquerading of love for the old woman, passed all the ranks of honour dividing a simple captain from a general of guards, was covered with orders, and became a millionaire and hereditary prince.

The Czarina's amours began to disgust even her tolerant courtiers. The forty-years-old Czarevitch could not refrain from expressing his indignation by saying that he would begin his reign by an order to flog Catherine's last lovers. That threat made the Zuboffs hate Paul, and

prompted Catherine to plot against him. She began to prepare the ground for putting her grandson Alexander on the throne, but she was prevented from doing so by death.

Catherine died suddenly in 1776. It is difficult to say whether she was murdered or not. The courtiers spread the news that she died of apoplexy.

That Catherine was not without bitter enemies amongst those who surrounded her is shown, quite apart from other proofs, by the following story. One of Catherine's last lovers was Mamonoff, who preceded Zuboff and followed Jermoloff. Mamonoff, however, did not enjoy the old woman's favours for long. The exacting Czarina, having noticed Mamonoff's very small enthusiasm for her *charmes passés*, was magnanimous enough to help him to marry the young and beautiful Princess Shcherbatov.

Mamonoff was very happy indeed! His charming wife was very inquisitive, and would make her husband tell her amusing stories about the Czarina's *tardive* love explosions. Naturally, Mme. Mamonoff could not keep such interesting news to herself, and by and by the society people of Moscow, where the Mamonoffs went to live, began to laugh heartily when they heard the secrets of the Czarina's dressing-room. The laughter was so contagious that it soon spread to St. Petersburg. Catherine went black in the face with anger when the gossip reached her ears.

A few days later the chief of the Moscow police surrounded the Mamonoffs' house with his

myrmidons during the night, and, accompanied by six of them disguised as women, entered the young couple's chamber. Mamonoff was bound and his wife flogged; then the policeman bowed to the frightened and humiliated Mamonoffs and showed to them the Czarina's order, adding that, should the gossip be repeated by them they may as well get ready for a journey to Siberia.

One can be certain that Mme. Mamonoff was less keen to hear any more stories concerning the Czarina, and still less inclined to repeat them; but one cannot doubt as well that her helpless anger was for her a greater punishment than flogging.

Catherine was very liberal in distributing punishment amongst the ladies of the Court, therefore one is justified in surmising that many of them thought of revenge. The Czarina also played freely with the love of her courtiers, depriving some of them of their lovers, and commanding the others to love those whom they could not.

With Catherine's death the list of Russia's feminine autocrats is closed; with them disappeared the hideous type of paid lovers, called in Russian so appropriately, "*vremienschchiks*"—"temporaries" being the literal translation of the word.

To a certain degree Catherine's death stopped Russia's grabbing policy. There is no doubt that the Czardom's big appetite for new territories, new subjects, and the propensity for "Russification," notwithstanding Russia's own

barbarism, were incidental to the ruling of Czarinas. Russia was ruined by having been governed by the men of the moment, men who by a Czarina's caprice were made rich, and to whom great titles were given ; and for this reason it was necessary to keep the Russians constantly feverish, to direct their attention elsewhere in order not to allow them to think about their misery. For this purpose Russia was continually at war ; the wars were purposely endless, and they were stopped only when a Czarina could throw a piece of land to her favourites and officials.

It would be a mistake to think that by Russia should be understood the Russian people, whom the extension of the boundaries did not benefit. On the contrary, they were obliged to pay for it by thousands of lives as well as by being corrupted through the inculcation of such pernicious principles as "Might precedes Right," and that one can become rich, not through industry and perseverance, but by robbery.

When Catherine died, there was hardly anything that Russia could annex ; and there was no necessity for increasing her already enormous territory, since there were no more such men as Potemkin, who officially cost Russia fifty millions of roubles besides another fifty millions stolen by him. On the other hand, the number of supporters of the throne grew into thousands of parasites, thieves, and prostitutes. It was a case of having sown the wind and gathered the whirlwind.

With Catherine's death Russia began a period of forced civilisation, which does not spread

enlightenment, does not educate the soul, but becomes a refined means of power exercised over the ignorant. Such an education depraves the heart and corrupts the mind. During those times Russia was inundated by new laws, ukases, manifestoes, reforms, but all those reforms, manifestoes, ukases and laws were only the exchange of a string for a rope, of a rope for a strap, of a strap for a chain.

To cry over their subjects, to pretend to give up for them everything except absolutism, seems to be the lot and curse of the rulers of Russia.

CHAPTER VI

Paul playing Hamlet—Murderers of Peter III. forced to be mourners at his funeral—Paul as a reformer—Kutaisoff's influence—Mme. Nelidov, Paul's mistress, succeeded by Anna Lopuchin—Russian life unbearable because of chaos in administration—Paul beats his ministers and even the Czarina—Conspiracy to dethrone him—Alexander's consent—The crime of the Zuboffs.

PAUL I. next succeeded to the throne. The little lion, who had spent three-fourths of his life behind the iron bars of a cage, who dreamed of freedom and conquests, noticed that the cage opened into an immense space of unlimited power, and he jumped out ; he stopped for awhile, turned back, and looked at the wretched cage, and was astonished that it seemed to him so powerful ; he rushed forward. A few days passed—the little lion instead of roaring only growled, and was then killed by hyenas.

Such a little lion was Paul I. He ascended the throne like Hamlet, like an avenger looking into the depth of human conscience. The first orders of the new Czar made the whole of the Court tremble, for these contradicted the ideas they had about the Czar's mental capacity.

First orders, then Catherine's funeral. Yes !

Paul played Shakespeare and Hamlet, for he ordered a funeral not only for Catherine, but also for her husband, Peter III. The coffin containing the remains of the strangled Czar

was opened, the skeleton was dressed up in purple, gold and Imperial insignia, and put beside Catherine's swollen corpse. Still the occasion would not have had the truly Shakespearian complexion but for the circumstance that at Peter III.'s coffin Alexis Orlov and Bariatynski were obliged to stand as guards of honour. The murderers were made mourners by the Imperial order. The sight was awful! Thousands of eyes looked at the faces of the murderers and burned them with contempt, while Paul I. cast on them his melancholic, sarcastic gaze. Hamlet would have regarded them in a similar way.

Alexis Orlov was far too great a scoundrel to be humiliated by anything other than chains and the knout; his face was full of helpless wrath and fear that something worse might come upon him. Bariatynski trembled and nearly fainted. Everybody was convinced that the climax to the funeral would be the execution of Orlov and Bariatynski (the third murderer, Tieplov, was dead), but they were disappointed. Paul continued to be Hamlet, and limited himself to chasing the murderers away from Court.

In the way Paul avenged his father he showed a great nobleness as well as considerable mysticism, of reflection about the future life. The way of Hamlet made him greater in the eyes of his subjects, but it also showed that Paul stood on the boundary of madness. At this point, had he been the dramatist's hero, Shakespeare would have killed him, but Paul had four years' reign.

After the funeral came reforms. Good reforms too. Again thousands of political prisoners were released; some lenient laws were introduced; war was stopped; schools were built: in a word, the Russian nation was again right in thinking that they would be able to make some progress and to reach the same level as the rest of Europe. But this regenerating stream did not last long. The Czar was subject to hallucinations, and this made him so irritable that he had no regard for anybody.

Paul saw round him conspirators, intriguers, spies and murderers. The valet Kutaisoff alone, raised now to the high post of Master of Horse, with the rank of General, and plastered with a profusion of orders of the foremost European countries, received the Czar's confidence. He alone, although he did not desire and did not care for any influence, was obeyed. He was the actual ruler. This was much the more interesting because the former lackey had no official position that would justify such an authority. Kutaisoff persevered in fulfilling his duty as Imperial barber, and was satisfied with himself.

It is not difficult to believe that the Court made every effort to get rid of Kutaisoff. Even European diplomatists were tired of being obliged to bow to the valet, who patted them on the shoulder, or spoke to them in such a friendly way, as for instance:—"Well, you lie, my dear fellow, but to the deuce with you; Kutaisoff is not a wolf, if you are well with him, he will be well with you." It was difficult, however, to remove Kutaisoff, for Paul I. did not allow

anybody, even his wife, even his mistress Nelidov, to say a word against him.

Those who stood at the head of the government, viz., Bezborodko, Kurakin, and Pahlen, suffered the most. Therefore they resolved to rid themselves of the barber, and so they set snares for him.

Pahlen explained to Kutaisoff that he should replace Nelidov, for she spoke ill of him to the Czar, and was Kurakin's friend. The barber disliked Kurakin, believed every word of the story, and chased Nelidov from the palace. Naturally, Bezborodko, Pahlen and Kurakin had ready a new mistress for Paul. This was the sixteen-years-old Anna Lopuchin. Kutaisoff arranged a *rendezvous*, and made the installation of the Imperial mistress.

Lopuchin was young, beautiful, and resolute for action. Paul was so much pleased with her that a few days later Anna's father, Peter Lopuchin, unknown until then, received a bombastic Imperial ukase which made him Prince "for services rendered to the country." Lopuchin's favour turned the whole of the Court towards her as to a new star, and made the courtiers hope that the barber's downfall was near at hand. The hope was not realised, for Lopuchin's influence ended where that of Kutaisoff began. Paul did not allow his mistress to say anything against the valet, and he remained.

In the meanwhile Paul's reign of reformation, with its tendency to remove the more arbitrary disabilities from his people, suddenly assumed a prohibitory character.

It was prohibited to wear round caps. It was prohibited to drive in Russian fashion. It was prohibited to import suspicious-looking books from abroad. The expression "it is prohibited" became the watchword of Paul's policy, and as the feverish mind of the Czar was not well balanced, as his absolute power was not limited by anything, as he had the privilege of being infallible as the head of the State, therefore there ruled in Russia not a disorder, but a strange, comical chaos, the more so because in those unjustified orders and unexplained prohibitions there was no logic. The orders were contradictory and exposed the nation to the mercy of officials; they produced thousands of prosecutions for buttons, caps, harnesses, and turned Russian life from hard to unbearable.

Paul would rise at four o'clock. At five he would not only receive his ministers, but kick them too. He would order a review of the guards at midnight, and break sticks on the backs of the officers. As it seems, those sticks were the cause of his doom. The Chancellor became ill through the blows he received from the Czar. A week later, when Lopuchin showed to Paul a letter full of bitterness and reproaches, which she had received from the Czarina, Paul became frantic, thrashed his wife in the presence of the Court, and ordered that the door leading from his chambers to Maria Theodorovna's should be walled up.

The Court doubted not that the Czar was going mad. The conspiracy was ready, headed by the Czar's bitterest foes. Then before all, the brothers Zuboff, Catherine's last lovers, were

contemptuously turned away from the Court. Platon Zuboff was driven away like a dog. Zuboff, who played at general in Prussia, was not less humiliated. The army received an order to come back, but the order mentioned no general, so Zuboff did not receive any notification ; he was not even officially dismissed. He was struck out from the list of active generals, and that was all.

Pahlen, the military governor of St. Petersburg, backed the Zuboffs. The former hated Paul ; he dreamed of a change, and of the moment when he would be able to glory in the power of Prime Minister. Those three men decided to dethrone Paul I., to force him to abdicate, and to put Alexander, the eldest of his four sons, on the throne. This plan, considering the dissatisfaction of the Court and the increasing unrest of the whole nation, was very easy to execute ; the conspirators needed only Alexander's sanction, for without it they could not gain anything ; on the contrary, they would lose everything. None of them wished to become an anarchist or Brutus.

It was the end of 1800. In Paris was heard the noise of an infernal machine by means of which an attempt on the life of the First Consul seemed to greet the nineteenth century. The European Courts sighed at the awkwardness of the barrel filled up with gunpowder and lead, and the Russian conspirators decided not to risk anything by using explosive means, but to be certain that their attempt should be successful.

Pahlen resolved to interview Alexander. The Czarevitch was undecided, for Paul loved his

children, took good care of them, and although sometimes he vexed them, they had not the slightest reason to be displeased with or to complain of him. It seems the negotiation lasted quite a long time before Alexander could be prevailed upon to give the conspirators his authorisation to act. How far that authorisation went one learns from facts.

The conspirators chose the nights of March 23rd and 24th, 1801, for dethroning Paul. They met at Platon Zuboff's house. The meeting was opened by a sumptuous supper and hard drinking. The most conspicuous conspirators were Pahlen, the two Zuboffs, and General Boenigsen; the rest of them were officers from different regiments. They drank hard to Paul's death, and to Alexander's health. They were so open with their enterprise that before the supper was over Kutaisoff was informed about the conspiracy. Kutaisoff, who, after a tedious day of service, enjoyed himself in gay company, put the list of the conspirators in his pocket and decided that there would be plenty of time to act the next day. That delay is explained by the fact that the denunciation was not exact, and could not be so, because, with the exception of the leaders, no one knew when and how the conspirators were going to act. The majority of those gathered at the Zuboffs' came there to become familiar with the idea of the plot.

Before midnight, when all heads were heated by drink, Platon Zuboff suggested going immediately to the Imperial palace, to seize upon Paul and force him to abdicate. The conspirators

were dumbfounded, for the proposition was too daring even for their drunken courage. There was a moment of hesitation—then Pahlen informed them that they had the Czarevitch Alexander's authorisation; more than that—an order. The effect of his speech was immediate. The conspirators rushed to their swords and pistols. They were divided into two parties, and a hundred men rushed against the one who was lord and master of death and life to a hundred millions.

Minutely the plot was planned out. At the sight of Pahlen, who was military governor of St. Petersburg, all doors and gates of the palace were opened. The conspirators put guards at the doors leading to servants' quarters. There was no resistance whatever, for the guards deemed it unnecessary in the presence of their immediate superiors. After they had passed the whole length of the palace, Pahlen and the three Zuboffs (Platon, Valerian and Nicholas) stopped with General Boenigsen at the door leading to the Czar's chamber. It was resolved that only those five should do the deed. They did not waste time; the brothers Zuboff forced the side door leading to the Czar's dressing-room and entered, carrying bull's-eye lanterns.

A young valet, whose room was to the left of the dressing-room, hearing the noise, jumped up from his bed, cried for help and barred the entrance to Paul's chamber. The Zuboffs and Pahlen rushed at him. Four hands pressed his neck, while Pahlen smote at his head with his sword. They threw the body into the room

behind the dressing-room. The sight of the blood seemed to stop the murderers, but not for long—they looked at each other—it was too late to retreat, and they rushed forward.

While this was going on in the dressing-room, Paul, alarmed at the valet's shouting, arose. He had no illusions ; he knew he was the son of Peter III. His first thought was to run away, and he rushed to the side where a door led into his wife's chambers, but that door was, by his own order, walled up ! Paul began to tremble—he looked in vain for a hiding-place.

In the meanwhile the door opened. The room was lighted by ominous lanterns. The Czar trembled behind a curtain. The conspirators directed the light towards the bed, and finding it empty were petrified. Again there was a moment of hesitation, then all of them, as if prompted by the same thought, began to search for the Czar.

A few seconds later, the Czar, blue from fear, was seized by the iron-like hands of the two elder Zuboffs. Boenigsen told them to put Paul into an armchair ; they handed him a pen to sign his abdication. The Czar did not think of resisting. Trembling all over he took the pen, but could not write. Boenigsen took hold of his hand and, guiding it, signed the document.

Paul reigned no longer. Boenigsen ran away with the act of abdication. The Czar remained with the three Zuboffs and Pahlen, for they had their accounts to settle with him. Nicholas Zuboff began by insulting the monarch with the most vulgar cursing. Platon and Valerian did the same. Pahlen reminded him of his being thrashed

by the Czar, and slapped him on the face. Then followed dreadful, wild, barbarous scenes. The murderers' fists changed the face of the ruler of All the Russias into one bloody wound. Paul moaned, called for help, tried to parry the blows—then he fell on the ground and was kicked by his assassins. They had had enough of vengeance.

"Let us finish!" commanded Pahlen. Platon and Valerian Zuboff took off their scarves, made a knot in them, and put them round Paul's neck. The Czar defended himself with all his strength, and with all the despair of a doomed man. By a supreme effort he succeeded in putting his hand between the scarf and his neck, to prevent himself from being strangled.

"Let me be! Let me breathe!" whispered the Czar with blue lips.

Platon Zuboff answered by swearing, and pulled the scarves tighter, while Nicholas Zuboff with a blow of his sword cut off the Czar's hand that prevented strangulation. Then they finished their work quickly. Platon and Valerian put their feet on Paul's chest, and tugged at the scarves—the murdered Czar's body lay in a pool of blood.

CHAPTER VII

Was Alexander I. guilty of his father's murder ?—The Zuboffs' splendid career—Alexander's education and character—Valerian Zuboff and the Metropolitan Platon—Alexander after coronation—Reforms in Russia—Alexander playing Trojan knight—Change in his policy.

THE Czar is murdered. Long live the Czar !

Paul's murderers rested for awhile. In their minds arose the question : What now ? Amongst those experienced scoundrels was a young man full of self-confidence, Nicholas Zuboff. He did not care about his brothers and Pahlen ! He left them and rushed to Alexander, greeting the new Czar. Nicholas Zuboff, besmeared with the blood of Paul the father, rushed to the Czar Alexander, the son. Alexander had not gone to bed ; he was waiting for news ! When Nicholas Zuboff told him about his father's death, Alexander fainted, according to some historians. They defend Alexander, and say that he gave the miscreants permission to force Paul to sign the abdication, but not to murder him ; that Pahlen and the Zuboffs committed the crime on their own account ; and that they overstepped the limit of authorisation granted to them by Alexander.

This, however, does not remove the fact that murder was committed, nor does it wash the blood off the parricide's hands. Alexander did not make his innocence apparent by punishing the murderers, disgracing them, and sending them

away from his Court. The Zuboffs, Pahlen, and Boenigsen were ordinary office-seekers—to whom Paul was an obstacle—who not only wished to avenge their wrongs, but before all to win favours from the successor.

One cannot deny that Paul was near madness, that he was a calamity for his country ; but he was not worse than his predecessors, and perhaps he was better, for he was more honest and not soiled by any crime. But even if we admit the necessity of dethroning him, even if we defend this murder on the ground that the life of an individual should be sacrificed for the benefit of millions, even then one cannot explain its egotistical, low, and contemptible motive.

Then the epilogue. The brothers Zuboff, after Paul's death, returned to Imperial favour. They received the highest possible rewards, for they were made members of the State Council, rich donations were given to them, and their influence lasted for years. Boenigsen, from a mere general, became a great and powerful commander, with everything that a monarch can give to his favourites, to men in his confidence, and to his supporters. The least brilliant was Pahlen's career, for either Alexander disliked him, or Pahlen disliked the Court. It sufficed that he withdrew from and avoided it ; but what was not given to Pahlen the father, an elderly man, fell to his three sons, for whom Alexander's accession opened the door to favours and honours.

A certain historian has said that he would strongly dislike to see in Alexander a murderer. Undoubtedly, that monarch had shown so many

noble aspirations, he had said so much about goodwill; he wished, apparently, to make his country so happy by giving enlightenment and freedom to it, that one regrets to put him amongst such gloomy satraps as Peter I., Catherine II., and Ivan the Terrible.

Perhaps his father's ghost made Alexander think so much about giving Russia freedom. Perchance Alexander's aspirations were only a desire to wipe out in some way his abominable crime!

Paul I., according to the genealogy of the Russian Imperial family, was the protoplast of a new branch called the Romanovs, although it could only be properly called Holstein-Gottorp, for Paul was accepted as the son of Peter III., the Duke of Holstein-Gottorp, a German, and the Duchess of Anhalt-Zerbst (Catherine), of the same nationality. But if one takes into consideration Peter III.'s manifestoes, Saltykov's testimony, as well as that of all contemporary courtiers, and even of Catherine herself, then Paul's line should be called only Saltykov-Anhalt. That unpleasant name was cleverly changed by some flexible writers into "the Pavlovich's line." Its characteristic is that its members succeeded each other in proper order, and although there was some friction and fighting between them, they did not use such violent means as were employed by Peter I., Anna, Elizabeth, Catherine II., or the second representative of that line, Alexander I.

Paul left four sons and five daughters; consequently he had made a foundation for a solid dynasty. Alexander I. was Paul's eldest son,

and as he had no children by his wife, Elizabeth Alexiejevna (of Brunswick), the successor to the throne was his younger brother Constantine, after whom came Nicholas and Michael.

Alexander I. received quite a good education, in accordance with his future exalted position. Catherine II. had herself chosen the mentors for her grandson. Laharpe, a Swiss, had developed the young Czarevitch's qualities of heart. Catherine's Court, however, was bound to influence Alexander, to make him effeminate, licentious, and corrupt. Fortunately for him, Alexander looked like his mother, Maria Theodorovna, and not like his father; the only pity about that likeness was that it was physical, and not moral. That Maria Theodorovna had common-sense and a noble soul one can see from her exhortation to the Grand Duke Constantine, when she learned that he quarrelled with his wife and led a dissolute life.

"Believe me, my dear son," wrote the Czarina, "that only personal virtues can make the people believe in our higher mission and in our superiority, and that such faith is the only guarantee of the happiness of the country."

That *credo*, however, was accepted by none of the Imperial family, either before or after Maria Theodorovna. Alexander I. did not accept it. He was very ambitious; he had the art of winning people; he knew how to be modest, how to laugh and weep, and look for inspiration in the clouds. Alexander was an exalted dreamer. He was an actor who did not forget that he had to please a large audience; he was an able histrion who,

when carried away by his part, even remembered his wig and powder, with which he made his face white when he simulated grief. Sometimes Alexander I. was noble and magnanimous, but even then he preferred artificiality ; he assumed poses of Cæsar, and did, before all, that which was becoming to him.

Bad as he was, Alexander I. shines with the colours of a rainbow in the gallery of gloomy figures of Russian autocrats. He was that little tallow candle in the gloomy and musty prison cell which seemed a bright light to the prisoner. One cannot, however, apply European standards to Alexander.

Alexander's brother, Constantine, was quite different, for he inherited his father's ugliness ; he was passionate, his instincts were wild. Already Catherine II. had had great trouble with Constantine's unbridled character, and Alexander I. was never sure that his brother, the successor to the throne, would not play some prank that would offend not only the dignity of a prince, but the decency of the peasant. Constantine's marriage with the Duchess of Saxe-Coburg, instead of making him more gentle, made him more savage, and was the cause of continual quarrels and scandals. Constantine refused to live with his wife, and declined even to keep up appearances. He was so eccentric that he found it natural to walk in public places attired in the gorgeous uniform of a general, but barefooted and without clothes from the waist. His behaviour was very vulgar, and perhaps one should not wonder so much, because Constantine's educa-

tion, in contrast to that of Alexander, was given to him in barracks. Nobody cared for him, for during his grandmother's and his father's life nobody thought that he would be the successor to the throne, and when he became Czarevitch none doubted then that Alexander would have a son who would take his place. Hence that neglect towards the Czarevitch, which lasted quite a long time, even after Alexander ascended the throne.

Paul's funeral was modest and quiet. The Russian nation received their new ruler gloomily. He looked bashful and confused. Perhaps he was ashamed to raise his head. He may be compared to a young and strong tiger who rebels for a long time against his keeper, jumps on him, overthrows him, and with one blow of his powerful paw kills him. The body of the keeper lies motionless under the tiger's paws. . . The beast foams and waits for a further fight. . . The body grows cold. . . The tiger retreats to a corner of the cage, looks askance, and is ashamed that the victory was so easy.

Alexander's looks and behaviour during the first few weeks of his reign were similar to that of the tiger. The young Czar listened, did what he was told to do, and waited for his father's ghost that would not appear and would not drive him away. Paul's body was motionless, and only once did it speak through the mouth of the Metropolitan Platon.

During the coronation, performed with exaggerated Asiatic splendour, the Prince Valerian Zuboff, one of Paul's murderers, who had taken

a prominent part during the ceremony, said to the old Metropolitan :

“ Your Excellency must feel very tired ? ”

“ Yes, I am very tired ! ” answered the Metropolitan, who taught Paul religion ; “ but I hope you will not give me another opportunity to be as tired as I am to-day.”

Zuboff grew crimson, and answered sharply :

“ No fear ! this one is not one of your pupils.”

The coronation made Alexander bolder, or, perchance, it rendered him more stupid and more superstitious. The young Czar, incensed, blessed, anointed, consecrated, became quieter, and must have said to himself : “ Either there is no God and I am God, or there is a God and evidently He is not angry with me ; otherwise He would not allow me to become so familiar with His symbols.”

And Alexander I. began his reign by reforms. Again the secret bureau was abolished, as it had been by Peter III. ; censure was made milder ; care was taken of instruction ; some concessions were made to peasants ; laws, bye-laws, and regulations were purified from many stupidities and absurdities, and there was prepared in Russia ground on which the Czar-benefactor was to plant and nurture the tree of civilisation, of freedom, and of happiness ; and this tree was going to be so large that the whole of Europe could seek rest under its branches.

Alexander ruled and dreamed. He dreamed about Marcus Aurelius's and Trojan's glory. He wished to be Charles the Great and the Calif from the “ Thousand and One Nights.” The Czar

dreamed, and with him dreamed Russia. The Czar deceived himself, and he deceived Russia. Russia beguiled itself and beguiled the Czar.

Those charming dreams did not last long. Napoleon reached Russia's boundaries. Alexander put on armour, and threw himself into a bustle of battles, coalitions, and alliances. Here also he was swayed by dreams, and those dreams cost Russia hundreds of thousands of lives. They exhausted and impoverished the country and stopped its development.

Russia had no desire whatever to be at war with France. She could look quietly at Austerlitz, Jena, and Friedland. The Continental system did not hurt her, for she had but very little to do with the sea. Alexander, however, wished to pose as a Trojan knight. Therefore he swore to be faithful to Austria, and was beaten with her. He was Castor to the Prussian king and foe to Napoleon, and he was thrashed again. Then suddenly he recognised the superiority of his powerful foe, poured water and champagne on the swords, and promised Napoleon to make war with England. As a result, he assumed the *rôle* of world avenger, and thereby ruined his own country. He wept in the arms of the Prussian Frederick, then was compassionate for "the great Corsican." He had some emotion even for the rising star of the Bourbons, and at the Congress in Vienna he posed for Agamemnon and distributed justice to nations.

The actor was satisfied with himself and with the scenery that served him as background. In Königsberg he was the friend of the fugitive

king of Prussia. In Tilsit he was the friend of Napoleon, and, according to his mind, he was entitled to the half of a laurel wreath inscribed "Napoleon - Alexander." Paul's son had not understood that if the question was about Alexander, then it was about the King of the Macedonians. The battlefield of Mozajsk, the burning of Moscow, St. Denis' Gate in Paris, all that was splendid scenery; but the actor was too utterly stupid when compared with the little captain from Toulon, or even with a half-dozen of his subordinates. The actor did his best. He wrote proclamations *à la* Cæsar, he spoke like Cyrus and Solon, and sighed like Croesus; he made efforts to be Archelaus, Hannibal, Scipio, and Xenophon, till he perspired, and the perspiration swept off his clever make-up of a liberator, and disclosed a tyrant.

Russia lived humbly during *dies iræ*; she understood that there was no time for changes and reforms, no time for decorating house, while the roof was burning. Suddenly, there were no more war cries of "fatherland in danger," no more enemies and fighting. Russia breathed and waited, waited, waited. The reforms suddenly stopped, the ears that listened to complaints became useless. Russia began timidly to remind Alexander of his promises. In vain! Alexander sighed, and when his subjects spoke louder, the Czar-reformer wept, and suddenly recollected that there were such things as Siberia, knout, and the gallows.

Russia picked up the gauntlet.

CHAPTER VIII

Alexander and Madame de Staël—Who were the Dekabrists ?—

The booty of Russian soldiers, brought from Napoleon's wars—The best of Russian families join the secret societies—European views on the Russian constitution—Russia a free country for centuries—Question of succession—The Grand Duke Constantine in love with a Polish lady—Alexander and Polish constitution—Alexander's mania for travelling—His sojourn in Caucasus—Did he die in Taganrog ?—Who was the mysterious hermit in Tomsk ?—Arguments to prove he was Alexander I.

ALEXANDER I. dreamed, and dazzled and deceived not only his Court and his subjects, but himself as well.

In 1812 he said to Madame de Staël with a melancholy smile : “ Ah, I have had no time yet to give a constitution to Russia.”

“ Sire, you are the best constitution for your country.”

The Czar-autocrat answered modestly : “ It is only an accident, then.”

That unintentionally deep sentence, pronounced by Alexander, was repeated and very much approved. For what more could a ruler say than that the personal qualities of a monarch cannot give any guarantee to a nation, that its happiness must have a more solid foundation ; they must be more lasting than one man's life ? It is certain that when Alexander said those words he did not suppose that his people not only wished to have the advantages

of a constitution, but were determined to have it.

“Dekabrists!” This word is often repeated. It is a name for those who wished for change; for those who were put beside nihilists, and were made first cousins of anarchists. A threatening, gloomy name that appeared like a ghost to bloody, treacherous, vengeful, corrupted Russia, and frightened quiet Europeans!

“Dekabrists” simply means “Decembrists,” and this name embraces the most intelligent and the most noble men that appeared in Russia after Napoleon’s invasion. They were sublime men who uplifted their sonorous but melancholy, proud but quiet, voices of martyrs, and cried: “Everything for our country, nothing for us!”

Dekabrists were originated in the same way as the sea-wave or the wind. They were born during the rainfall of French bullets, accompanied by frenzied shouting of “*Vive l’Empereur!*”—in the conflagration of Smolensk, Moscow, Leipzig, in the heroic fight at Waterloo. Such was the birth of the Dekabrists, or rather of the people with an idea, people who did not know that they would become Dekabrists, that they would be called by such a name.

During the Napoleonic wars the Russian soldiers talked at camp fires about old times, about European culture, and in that way they instructed themselves. The French Revolution, the fight for freedom in the United States, the Spanish war for independence, freemasonry, the German secret societies, the despair of agonising Poland, Swedish disturbances within, all these

were striking so strongly against Russian soldiers' breasts, that even the armour of the Imperial guards could not withstand such blows. For that armour was to the Russian soul as a wooden wall to the sun. Sun-rays cannot pass through wood without making it warm.

Russian soldiers, brought up in the half-barbarian rigour inaugurated by Frederick, made half-idiotic by discipline, often knouted, struck in the face still oftener, were kept on the same level of feeling as a house dog. These soldiers, laughing at the madness of the Poles who were dying for some idiotic constitution—these soldiers began to think and to talk.

That talk was like a breeze of summer evening, bringing the scent of wild flowers, roses, jasmines, together with sweetness of acacias, resinous exhalations from pine trees, and the strength of fields covered with wheat. They talked about Danton and Marat, Lafayette and Washington, Robespierre and the Bourbons, Wellington and Blucher; about the eighteenth of *Brumaire* and the third of May; about Tugenbund and Andreas Hofer; about the fourteenth of July, and the English *Magna Charta*; about Napoleon, Chambrun, Carnot!

And behold! in the headquarters of the Russian second army corps, near the tent of Field-Marshal Wittgenstein, two brothers named Muravieff, officers of the general staff, noblemen, conceived the idea of a secret society, a society of good purpose, a society with love for its country and people. The Muravieffs were so popular that they soon found numerous adherents. In that society

nobody used persuasion, nobody preached. A new companion would join, and immediately he would hear his own thoughts expressed, his own ideals cherished.

The Russian army returned after years of war, and while the commandants thought that their soldiers only carried home gold and valuable things, while the commandants were righteously ashamed that their "heroes" were such fine robbers, those commandants did not dream that the same soldiers carried also a booty which could never be confiscated; that there was no human force that could deprive them of it. The Russian soldiers carried to posterity torches of enlightenment, and a banner by which they should stand for ever.

In St. Petersburg the head and heart of that society was the Prince Wittgenstein's aide-de-camp, Pestel, son of one of the most cruel governors in Siberia, son of a half-savage despot, whose fist had quenched many a life. Pestel came out from the cadet school. He was the pride of the general staff; he was rich and good-looking, an officer of the guards, already a colonel and a republican! The Prince Trubecski followed Pestel, then Bestuzhev, Kachowski, the Princes Obolinskis, Volkonskis, Galitzins, Schachovski and Bariatynski and Ryliev. These were followed by the best people in the land, who were the pride of Russia. Modest associations of "general welfare," from which society emanated "Salvation," and a powerful organisation of "South" and of "North" and of "United Slavs." The most interesting thing about these

societies is that they had in their ranks not degenerate "intellectuals," for people of that class were not yet known in Russia ; there were no proletariats among them, nor were there any foes of Alexander I., and of the Russian dynasty. The mentors of those associations did not think of terrorism, they did not discuss attempts on life, they did not claim that high aims could be reached by low means ; they dreamed only of a change accomplished by the will of conscious millions, by the arousing of human sentiment in the most degraded officials, who would change into citizens.

"United Slavs" went further, they were more logical and more sure. Their programme was a federation of all Slavs into one Republic. Besides those three most important societies there were many small provincial ones, but they were soon absorbed by the main bodies.

What is not only interesting, but simply unheard of, is that all those societies looked up to Alexander I., all expected of him the realisation of their dreams, and the only propaganda they advocated was that an official should not steal, and should not use his position for bad purposes, that lords should not oppress their serfs, that officers should be humane towards simple soldiers, that judges should cease to serve the mighty ones, that religion should not be a tool for politicians, and that enlightenment should be diffused.

The concentration of the desires of secret societies in the person of Alexander I. was not without logic. Alexander played continuously the part of reformer and liberal. He assured his

people that he was preparing a constitution for them. Among other assurances given by him, that are historical and unquestionably authentic, is the one he gave at the opening of the Polish Diet in Warsaw in 1818.

Dismembered Poland, after ten years of fierce fighting by Napoleon's side, succeeded at the Vienna Congress in obtaining independence for a small portion of her former territories. This independent kingdom of Poland was, however, under the sceptre of Russian Czars as "Kings of Poland." In the beginning, at least, that lessened kingdom of Poland had its autonomy, and the Poles could breathe freely. Alexander appointed his brother Constantine commander of the Polish army, while he himself played the *rôle* of "constitutional Polish king."

At the opening of the Polish Diet the Czar not only pressed the Poles to his heart from the height of his throne, but said distinctly that he would give a constitution to his Russian subjects also as soon as they were able to appreciate its value.

The aim of the members of the secret societies was then to make their brothers conscious of the value of a constitution; the rest was going to be done by the Czar's will. These societies did not presume that after eighty years the citizens of the Russian Empire would be considered insusceptible of constitutional government, that even the constitutional European nations would think their demands excessive; that the same nations which became enlightened through their constitutions would discuss the "possibility of a constitu-

tion in Russia," as if a constitution were anything else than an alphabet of State organisation, and as if one could learn how to read without previously learning the alphabet.

Those who held such an erroneous opinion did not know or recollect that the same ignorant and savage Russia was ruled till the first half of the sixteenth century by the will of the people, that the same Russia had three republics, viz., in Pskov, Novgorod, and Viatka, which existed and prospered during seven centuries. Russia, because of the *coup d'état* made by Peter I. against Dumas, against gatherings of nobles, and against the will of the people, rolled down to the precipice of absolutism. Russia, taking an example from neighbouring Poland, knew how to force even Ivan the Terrible to take an oath to the people in the public square in Moscow. Russia had an autonomy when the rest of Europe had not yet dreamt of it. Europe prefers not to know this ; she is in raptures over Peter the First's mission, and admires his originality ! Such an originality ! Thus, for instance : Peter I. ordered bells which were rung to call the Duma together to be knouted and sent to Siberia ! Those bells are to this day deposited in Tobolsk. The whole fault with those bells was that they sounded the alarm when the freedom of the country was at stake, that they called for resistance against tyranny.

Undoubtedly the secret societies were aware of the deported bells, and of the time when Russian absolutism began, but they believed in Alexander and waited.

In the meantime the question of the succession to the throne—notwithstanding that the Czarevitch was Alexander's brother Constantine—became very complicated in 1819. The Grand Duke Constantine, who, as commander of the Polish army, resided in Warsaw, fell in love with the beautiful Joanna Grudzinska, a young lady of gentle birth. This was very serious, for the proud Polish lady did not wish to become a mistress even of a Czarevitch. To replace the Baroness Fryderyks, Constantine, carried away by love, asked his brother not only for his consent to be allowed to divorce the Duchess whom he hated, but also for permission to marry legitimately Joanna Grudzinska.

There was a long and fiery correspondence between Warsaw and St. Petersburg. Czarina-mother and Czar-brother used all possible arguments to persuade Constantine to give up the idea of a morganatic union. The Grand Duke, with all the impetuosity of his savage character, insisted on having his way. At last there came a conditional permission. To marry the Polish lady, Constantine would have to consent to give up all claims as heir to the throne in favour of his brother Nicholas, who was just then married to Carolina the daughter of the Prussian King. The Grand Duke did not hesitate one moment to sacrifice "Mononomach's bonnet" for the adored Joanna. The marriage of Constantine with Joanna Grudzinska, to whom the Czar gave the title of the Princess of Lovich, took place in 1820, and in 1822 the rights to the throne passed to the Grand Duke Nicholas.

That peacefully-arranged change met with another, perchance more important for Russia, and this was Alexander's change of liberal tendencies. A despot and bureaucrat named Arakchejev now became the Czar's friend and confidant. Alexander was influenced by Arakchejev, not because the latter would dominate him by the strength of his conviction, but because it was convenient for him, and it pleased him.

The new way of reigning was begun by the arrest of the famous Siemionov regiment of the guards, and its imprisonment in the Petropavlosk fortress. This regiment had participated in the *coups d'état* organised by the Czars of Russia, was corrupted, had too much assurance, boasting of "intimate acquaintance with mother Catherine," also its soldiers "reasoned too much." Alexander, wishing to humiliate them, appointed as their commander a savage German, named Schwartz. In a few days the new chief imprisoned the first battalion; the whole regiment protested against such severe treatment. The Siemionovs were all dismissed and dispersed all over the country; the ranks of the regiment were filled up with soldiers taken from other regiments.

That incident was followed by an Imperial order abolishing all Masonic orders, dissolving all societies and clans, even religious sects. Before Russia could become familiar with that change of front, the papers received warning that not only must nothing be written about a constitution, but that even the word must not be mentioned.

In answer to such rash and autocratic measures, most respectful protests and remonstrances were

sent to the throne. Alexander suddenly became taciturn, for, as a Russian writer said, "he distrusted noblemen, and he knew not the people." As in those remonstrances it was often mentioned that the Poles progressed because of their constitution, and that the wounds of martyrs were healed by it, the Czar looked askance at the kingdom of Poland, and made its constitution dependent upon his humour.

To these loyal remonstrances and honest efforts succeeded a sudden change. Advising voices became silent. Secret societies tried to solve the question: "In the case of success, what should be done with the members of the Imperial family?"

While some members proposed banishment, others imprisonment, Pestel alone had the courage to say: "The Imperial family must be annihilated." A shout of indignation greeted Pestel's advice. The secret societies continued to dream, only now they excluded from their dreams Alexander I.

In 1820 Paris was seething with indignation, caused by the murder of the Duke de Berry by Louvel. From that city came news of attempts against the Duchess de Berry, Mouchard, and the Duke Decrés, while St. Petersburg, covered with a net of conspiracies, was indignant and approved of Louvel's head being cut off.

In the meanwhile Alexander was seized with a mania for persecution; he feared being killed. For this reason, the number of spies and gendarmes was increased; Alexander was separated from his people by a strong wall of soldiers, and the



ALEXANDER I.

country was given over to the depredations of favourites and officials. He was not satisfied even with these precautions. Reports about plots, in most cases imaginary and false, calculated to make the Czar more and more distrustful, increased his irritation and restlessness. Alexander felt safe nowhere. He was afraid of the gloomy Winter Palace, and of the dusky Kremlin; he was afraid of Warsaw defending its violated constitution.

In the gigantic Russian Empire there was not a quiet corner for its absolute ruler, there was not a habitation where the most powerful monarch could hide from feverish visions and superstitious fears. Alexander travelled from one end of the country to another, seeking for rest, trying to escape, as it was reported, from his own thoughts. It was said that the liberal, progressive Czar-philosopher became a mystic, and that he tried to pacify, by prayers, the storms raging in his soul.

The fact was that some incomprehensible fight was going on in his brain. Was it incomprehensible? Alexander not only prayed, but in a letter to Arakchejev appealed before all to God; and when Arakchejev's mistress, Anastasia Schumska, was killed, the Czar asked Archimandrite Fotij to console his favourite with "the help of the Almighty." The letter ended with an earnest request that he, the Czar, should not be forgotten in his prayers, and that a blessing should be sent to him. Both those letters were dated October 30th, 1825.

In the meanwhile the Imperial travels ruined

the country. Even now the roads in Russia are very bad, but eighty years ago, with the exception of a few principal arteries of communication, there were practically no roads at all.

The officials who had stolen all the money which was destined for building roads, were obliged to make frantic efforts to hide their rascality. With blows of the knout, therefore, they forced thousands and thousands of peasants to build roads for the Czar, in order to hide from him the misery of the towns and villages. The people groaned, but the knout forced them to obey. They worked day and night, building roads, planting them with trees, covering every inch with sand, whitewashing every stone. The Czar was delighted with the sight of order and prosperity, and did not dream that as soon as he passed, the freshly-planted trees faded and rotted, that artificially and temporarily-built roads were soon changed into swamps.

Towards the end of the summer of 1825 the Czar went south to the shores of the Sea of Azov, apparently for the benefit of the Czarina Elizabeth's health. Alexander's departure from the capital took place under very peculiar circumstances. He went to the monastery called Alexandro-Nevskaia Lavra, and asked the Metropolitan Seraphin for a blessing. Afterwards, according to the chronicles, he assisted at a funeral mass. Finally he went to the cell of one of the oldest monks, and had a long conversation with him. He came out very much moved.

About the middle of October the Czar went to

Taganrog, and leaving the Czarina there he continued his travels in the Crimea. At the end of November he came back to Taganrog, apparently with a bad cold. The Court physician ordered him to stay in bed. The Czar's sufferings were increased by the alarming news sent by General Witt of the existence of an enormous conspiracy embracing the whole of the army. This news made a great impression on the Czar, and he became dangerously ill. Alexander expressed his wish to receive absolution and to have the last sacrament administered to him. A few days later he died.

Alexander I. died in Taganrog, on December 1st, 1825 ; died, notwithstanding the story about the " sudden " cold, full of manly strength, for he was only forty-eight years old !

The death of the Czar coming so unexpectedly, contemporaries began to inquire into the cause. Was it really a cold ? While contemporaries gave various answers to that question, their descendants are still puzzled whether Alexander really died in Taganrog on December 1st, 1825 ! Or, rather, when the Emperor's death was announced, had the first-born son of Paul I. and Maria Theodorovna died also ? Those questions would be strange if the testimony of people and things were not stranger still, if not for a State secret which has not yet been elucidated, and which undoubtedly exists, guarded by the ruling Russian family.

It is a fact that Alexander I. was a parricide ; during the first years of his reign he desired to make his country and his people happy ; not only

wars distracted Alexander's projected reforms, but also his gloomy thoughts; it is a fact that those thoughts returned to him when the clatter of wars was over, when he was not distracted any more by meeting other monarchs, by congresses, and triumphal receptions. Alexander deceived himself and others by an apparent desire to grant freedom; but in contrast to his subjects and Europe he looked quietly on while the Greeks fought the Turks for their freedom. He often spoke of abdication, and of leading a quiet, simple life.

The relations of Alexander with the exalted Madame Krüdner strengthened the mystical in him, induced visions, weakened his reasoning power, and perverted it by Utopian philosophy.

A few months before his death, Alexander, when in Warsaw, tried to induce his brother Constantine and his wife the Princess of Lovich to leave the vanity of this world and to go with him to Rome; he represented to them in such vivid terms the charms of the new life, his arguments were so warm, he explained so well the way in which his plan could be carried out, that the couple almost gave way. The succession to the throne was arranged. The Grand Duke, besides his solemn renunciation, assured him again in 1823 that he would not become Czar. Alexander made a will in favour of his brother Nicholas, and handed it to the Council of State. He was at least perspicacious.

Further, a few months before going to Taganrog, the Czar said to one of his generals: "I know I am surrounded by murderers, and that they want

my life," and Witt warned him that absolutism was in danger.

Lastly, after Alexander's death there was a peculiar scene between Nicholas and Constantine. Both swore to be faithful to each other. Both renounced the throne, and although a courier from Taganrog brought Constantine, who was in Warsaw, news of his brother's death seven days later, and the same news reached Nicholas in St. Petersburg after ten days, Russia waited twenty-five days for Nicholas's manifesto.

The above-mentioned facts are crowned by the following one. Shortly after Alexander's death there settled in Tomsk (in Siberia) a mysterious hermit. Sometimes that mysterious hermit was thought to be some "Dekabrist" that belonged to an illustrious family, but it seems that the authorities knew next to nothing about the hermit, Fomich. He was very reticent about his past, and they dared not question him, for the orders from the capital were to show him the highest possible respect.

Fomich occupied a separate, modestly-furnished house with a garden. He had but little intercourse with his neighbours, and avoided all conversation that would throw any light on his life. One of the governors of Tomsk took a personal interest in the mysterious man, and tried to obtain some information about him, but he received such an admonition from the Imperial Chancery that he never again attempted to interfere with Fomich.

The inhabitants of Tomsk grew accustomed, little by little, to the exile, much more so as for ages they had been accustomed to see princes and the

highest dignitaries dragging their chains. Although it seemed to them very strange that Fomich should receive messages brought by Imperial *feldjegers*, they stopped gossiping even about that. Only when Alexander II., son of Nicholas I., came in 1837 to Tomsk, and the day after his arrival was driven to Fomich's house and remained with the hermit alone for some time, did the gossip about the old man revive and give rise to new conjectures.

Fomich died, at ninety years of age, in 1870, and was buried, according to his wish, in the little garden surrounding his house. His life was a great mystery. But neither his living there, nor his appearance were extraordinary matters in the annals of Tomsk. Only his death made an impression. The solitary house, kept in repair and taken care of, remained unoccupied. Governors changed, but the order received from St. Petersburg, that the house should be left intact, is observed to this day.

In 1893, the successor to the throne, Nicholas, actual Czar of Russia, when travelling in Siberia, came to Tomsk. He visited Fomich's house, and prayed at the hermit's grave.

From that time the hermitage has been open to visitors. Anyone is allowed to go in and read the modest inscription on the tombstone: "Fomich," and one can see at the little altar a small silver *Ikona*. That *Ikona* could tell much—perhaps all—about Fomich. Among the unusual circumstances that accompanied Alexander's death, the courtiers remarked the loss of a small silver holy image, which the Czar

Alexander I. always carried, for he attributed to it some very peculiar mystic value.

Was Fomich the Czar Alexander I. ? The rumours increase every year. They say "Yes," and are not contradicted either by dates, or by events, or by Alexander's character and designs. The rumours say that the Czar dreamed for a long time of quiet, of solitude, and mayhap of penitence ; that the Czar, there in Taganrog, had noticed not only the risk of his spiritual balance, but had convinced himself that his throne stood on the edge of a precipice. His empty phrases showed the door of freedom to his people, but his lack of will and strength ruined all his good intentions. Alexander's sojourn in Taganrog was as critical a juncture as that when he waited on the memorable night for the abdication of his father, who was compelled to sign it with a cord round his neck. The Russians came to the conclusion that they would no more beg for freedom. They wished to have no one to thank for it, but were determined to take it, to be grateful only to themselves for it. The only means to conquer this desire was prison, knout, katorga, and death. Alexander dreaded to use such means, he dreaded it perchance because of his conscience, perchance because of his sickly imagination, and so he had recourse to death.

Whether this death was political or physical is a matter of indifference ; for Alexander it was very useful and timely, for he could only ruin and was unable to build.

It is worthy of notice that the Russian people believed for a long time that Alexander I. was

alive, that he was hidden amongst his people, that he saw everything, and that he would come back to the throne in order to avenge their wrongs and to free the oppressed.

Tolstoy has written a story based on that legend. According to him, Alexander I. was present at the punishment of a soldier sentenced to receive two thousand blows of the stick. The soldier fainted after having received the first thousand. The punishment was interrupted and the poor wretch was carried to the hospital, where, according to Russian custom, he was taken care of and when well was to receive the other thousand. Alexander I. having conceived the idea of substituting himself for the soldier, brought the man to his own bedroom, and himself occupied the soldier's bed. The Czar received the thousand blows, and after that he went to Siberia as an exile of his own will.

This legend, had it no real foundation, would be worthless, for the sufferings of *muziks* make them inclined to believe in imaginary saviours. It suffices to say that in the neighbourhood of Moscow there still exists a sect of "Napoleonists," the members of which worship Napoleon and believe that he will return to the Kremlin to root out evil and to give new laws.

Pushkin characterised Alexander thus :—

"Był wsio w dorożie
A umier w Taganrogie."

("He was always on the road,
And he died in Taganrog.")

He was right ! Alexander I. was continuously

on the road to reforms, to changes, but never reached anything.

Notwithstanding all that, one should remember that Alexander I., even by his phraseology, by the short moments of his enthusiasm which kindled so many hopes—even by his continually playing a comedy, has brightened up the gloomy pages of Russian history.

CHAPTER IX

Hesitation of Nicholas to accept the crown—Patriotic societies and their leaders—How the plot was discovered—The Dekabrists, their defeat, arrest, and execution—One of the most atrocious tragedies in the history of any nation—Nicholas's cruelty—Russians indignant but helpless—Ignorance of Europe.

ALEXANDER'S death, actual or otherwise, produced an unexpected confusion in State affairs. The confusion was increased because the Grand Dukes Constantine and Michael were in Warsaw, while their brother Nicholas was in St. Petersburg, and because the majority of courtiers and the army regarded Constantine as the Czar, notwithstanding that he had given up all his rights in favour of his brother Nicholas. The general belief that Constantine was to be the Czar was shown in the behaviour of a *feldjeger*, who came from Taganrog to Warsaw with the news of Alexander's death. He fell on his knees before the Grand Duke, believing he was to be the Czar. Constantine, however, did not wish to ascend the throne, and sent a courier to his brother and the mother-Czarina, repeating his renouncement of the crown and swearing allegiance to Nicholas, who, after a long conversation with his mother, went to a church and swore allegiance to his brother Constantine.

Confusion was felt all over the Russian Empire. The Governor of Moscow wished that

the Senators should be sworn to Constantine, while the Metropolitan of that city refused to accept the oath, saying that it had no meaning to him, for he knew a certain secret which made that oath useless. It must be added that he did not mention Nicholas, as though he doubted Alexander's death.

Correspondence between Warsaw and St. Petersburg continued, until at last Nicholas came to a decision. He gave orders that Alexander's last will should be taken from the State Council and should be read ; he also drafted a manifesto.

This manifesto, however, did not appear until December 24th, and it was not read to the army until December 26th, which means that Russia was without a Czar for twenty-five days.

In the meanwhile, the secret patriotic societies, which, led by Pestel, were ready to take a decisive step by 1826, were disturbed by Alexander's death, which prevented them from acting as much as did their faulty organisation and lack of decision.

The head of the conspirators, Colonel Pestel, was then in the south of Russia, at the headquarters of the commandant of the army, the Prince Wittgenstein. Here he commanded a faithful regiment, and had six colonels ready to lead their regiments at his command. Pestel had conceived a daring plan, which was approved by his comrades. They were to wait Alexander's arrival at the manœuvres and to arrest him, together with his brothers and staff, and proclaim a Republic. This plan was feasible, for it was supported by the army ; but it was betrayed by

Captain Majborod to Count Witt, who, on his part, reported it to Taganrog. Thus it happened that while a courier carried the news of the Czar's death to the capital, General Chernisheff, the famous *escamoteur* of Napoleon's plans, was on the way to Kieff to arrest Pestel and his partisans.

In St. Petersburg Ryliev was the soul of the conspirators, but Ryliev was an enthusiast, a dreamer, a poet. He could not organise, calculate, nor plan.

Ryliev dreamed and wrote :

"I will give my life for my country. . . .
I am aware—I know and feel it.
And with joy, O Lord,
I thank Thee for my lot !"

Ryliev was not the only one to burn with the noble desire of expected martyrdom. A young colonel named Sergius Muravieff Apostle wished the same, and he wrote :

"Je passerai sur cette terre,
Toujours rêveur et solitaire,
Sans que personne m'aie connu.
Ce n'est qu'à la fin de ma carrière
Que, par un grand trait de lumière,
On verra ce qu'on a perdu."

In St. Petersburg the conspirators were recruited not only from the army, but from amongst the highest officials. Everyone who wished to rise above the office seekers, above the myrmidons of Czardom, was a member of one of three great patriotic societies, which, one can truly say, were composed of the best people, in regard

to birth and intelligence, in Russia. The conspiracy was so ramified that its working was faulty because of its too numerous springs. It is sufficient to state that the conspirators were backed, not only by the aristocracy of blood and mind, not only by the enthusiastic young men, but also by such people of importance as the Procurator of the Senate. The conspirators knew everything that was happening in the Winter Palace, everything that was said by any member of the Imperial family, and every movement of the autocratic machine.

Naturally, during the confusion produced by Alexander's death, there was activity amongst the conspirators. The opportunity for a *coup d'état* was so great and so tempting! The mutual swearing of allegiance by Constantine to Nicholas and *vice versâ* was an excellent time to make any conspiracy a success. Besides, the plan itself was simplified by the events; for instance, instead of winning partisans for an idea, or instead of pouring out blood for the Imperial family, to disseminate propaganda in favour of a constitution, it sufficed to stir up intelligently the partisans of Constantine and of Nicholas, to erect a monument of freedom in the midst of the fighting parties, and to point out that at the foot of that monument there was order and peace.

This plan was unanimously approved of by the conspirators, but as it needed, if not a Machiavelli, at least a Metternich to carry it out, it was never executed.

Time was passing away swiftly. On December 23rd, when the conspirators knew that

Nicholas was drafting a manifesto on his ascension to the throne, Prince Trubeckoi, colonel of the Imperial guards, elected by the conspirators to the post of dictator, was undecided what to do. The plotters were making the most strange and romantic projects, and were only too glad to postpone the decisive moment of action. This vacillation cannot be put down to cowardice, but to the deep aversion the conspirators had for violence, on account of the nobleness of their feeling and their desire to avoid shedding blood.

It is possible that the night of December 23rd would have passed without incident if it had not been for Ryliev, who seized a letter written to Nicholas by a young Judas named Rostopcoff. Nicholas already knew the contents of the letter, and he was familiar with the conspiracy. The news brought by Ryliev was sufficient to convince everybody that the day of martyrdom had arrived. The conspirators were struck dumb with astonishment. Ryliev alone preserved all his wits, and exclaimed, "We are lost, but let us die with arms in our hands!"

This exclamation aroused the others from their stupor, and they decided to act at once. It was resolved that when they were asked to take the oath to Nicholas they were to decline to do so, and were to lead their regiments into the Senate Square. They were to force the senators to issue a manifesto calling up a Duma, and to form a temporary government. It was to rest with the Duma what should be the form of government, as well as what should be the fate of the Imperial family.

Such a peaceful *coup d'état* seemed to the conspirators to be the best. Why should they murder and shed blood when they could accomplish their purpose through the weight of their number and the importance of their members? The leaders might die, for they were certain of a conflict, but they would be sacrificed in the cause of Russia's future welfare.

The next day Prince Oblolensky asked how many soldiers the conspirators would be able to bring into the Senate Square. The answers were very uncertain.

The eve of December 26th came. The conspirators met for the last time. On December 26th the oath was to be taken in the barracks of every regiment. The debates were very warm. Colonel Bulatoff was sure of his regiment of grenadiers. Colonel Bestuzhev promised to bring the Moscow Regiment; others pledged themselves in a similar way. In case they should fail to carry out their plan, the revolted regiments were to be conducted out of town and marched in the direction of Novgorod. Towards the end of the meeting someone asked, "Suppose the Czar should have the courage to appear before the rebellious troops?"

The youthful Kahovski's eyes shone gloomily, and he growled, "Then he must be killed!"

To this Ryliiev exclaimed, "No! for God's sake! It would be dreadful!"

"But unavoidable. I swear I will kill him!" burst out Kahovski.

Ryliiev became silent.

When the meeting was over, Ryliiev spoke to

Bestuzhev, who took Kahovski aside and tried to persuade him to give up his mad design.

Had this not been reported by the commission of inquiry, one would think that it was a story invented by the friends of the Dekabrists in order to show their magnanimity, which, however, from a revolutionary point of view, was sheer madness.

The next day the conspirators began to act very early; the civilians were scattered amongst the people, the officers were with their soldiers.

Alexander Bestuzhev kept his word, and brought into the Senate Square the whole regiment of the Guards. He was followed by Konovicyn leading the grenadiers, and by another officer at the head of the marine infantry. These were all the forces commanded by the conspirators. As to the other regiments, they had either been persuaded to give up the conspiracy, or were already disarmed; or their leaders had been arrested or lacked the courage to carry out their allotted parts.

The Senate Square was seething, for behind the revolted regiments there were thousands of people cheering for Constantine and his wife Constitution (*sic*).

Bestuzhev, Ryliev, and Gorsky, with several other conspirators, were at the head of revolted soldiers, exhorting them to be steady, and waiting for the dictator, the Prince Trubeckoi. He never came, and as no one wished to take his place, they remained without a leader. Ryliev alone would not have hesitated to take the com-

mand, but he was a civilian without any authority over the soldiers.

Hours passed in waiting. One by one those regiments which had remained loyal began to be posted opposite the rebels. A horse guards regiment charged, but was stopped by the lively firing of the revolted troops.

The situation grew acute. General Miloradovich wished to speak to the revolted regiments, but was wounded by a pistol-shot fired by Kahovski.

At this moment, Nicholas, accompanied by his brother Michael and a glittering staff, appeared in the Senate Square. It was the decisive moment ; all depended now on the conspirators' determination. Only one command : " Fire ! " was wanted to remove the Russian tyrant. The conspirators, however, waited for their dictator, and not only commanded the soldiers not to fire, but looked indifferently at the muzzles of the cannons pointed at them.

Nicholas understood the situation and lost no time. The cannons were ready. He was not prompted by benevolence and magnanimity. He nodded to his aide-de-camp Suhozanet, and gave the command, " Fire ! " The guns, however, remained silent.

Suhozanet rushed to the first cannon and shouted fiercely :

" Have you not heard the command ? "

" Yes, sir ; but they are ours. . . "

" Fire, I say ! "

This time he was obeyed, and the cannons belched iron on the Dekabrists and the people.

The first cannonade was followed by a second, a third, a fifth, and a tenth, until the square was covered with dead and wounded ; until the last urchin, attracted by the uniforms and firing, ran away.

The Dekabrists, exposed to such a murderous fire, did not dream of resistance. They were without a commander. They paid bloody tithe and then retreated as fast as they could. The Senate Square was now quiet. The loyal regiments camped by large fires, and during the night were busy gathering up the bodies of their brothers.

From an historical point of view the rebellion was suppressed and finished. For the Dekabrists, however, it was only the beginning of the last act of a bloody tragedy.

The defeat at the Senate Square was followed by numerous arrests, which required neither much cunning nor much trouble ; the conspirators did not think of fleeing or hiding. They allowed themselves to be imprisoned with a kind of belief in the necessity of martyrdom. The behaviour of the Dekabrists was as unusual as was their attempt. Precisely speaking, there was no attempt, for the conspirators did not use the means employed by Peter I., Elizabeth, Catherine, the French Revolution, or the Roman Senate ; they understood the necessity of sacrifice, and they determined that it should be themselves.

Pestel alone, perhaps, was bold enough to bring the Dekabrists from the clouds of their dreams down to the hard world of reality. Pestel, however, was imprisoned in Tulczyn, which was

then the headquarters of Prince Wittgenstein. A handful of faithful officers wished to free Pestel. They succeeded in inducing a company of soldiers to rebel, and with them they made a stand against the loyal regiments, but as they acted without a preconceived plan and without an experienced commander, they were defeated.

However, if the Dekabrists had wished, they could have easily seized the Winter Palace with the troops they commanded. They could then have overturned the Russian throne. It would not have been a difficult task, for an absolute monarch, standing above the law, above the will of the people, above religion, depends entirely on the goodwill of the commander of his guards; it is only necessary for the guards to kill the autocrat, for somebody else to mount to the top of the machine, and it will move on again. This truth, proved so many times by history, was known to the Dekabrists, but they were idealists and fanatics in their love of their fellow-men. They preferred the scaffold to the steps of the throne.

Nicholas I. behaved quite differently towards the Dekabrists. He was very energetic about annihilating the conspirators, and members of the three great branches—Southern, Northern, and Slavs—were imprisoned. The arrests at St. Petersburg were conducted in a peculiar way. The conspirators were first brought to the principal guard-house. There they were identified, stripped of their uniforms, and bound. After that they were removed to the Winter Palace, where the Czar himself, by promises of pardon and reward, and threats of tortures, tried to make

them speak. Then they were conveyed to the Petropavlosk fortress.

The behaviour of the Dekabrists towards the Czar varied, but one must say that there were very few who were spiritually weak. Nicholas tried hard to master his awful temper, but was not always successful. When Sergius Muravieff-Apostle refused to speak, the Czar became furious. He stamped, and threatened the bound and defenceless prisoner with his clenched fists.

"I am your Czar ! I am master of your life !" he cried furiously.

Muravieff looked proudly on the angry Czar, and said quietly :

"You ? To me you are but the son of a bastard."

Nicholas rushed on the defenceless Muravieff, threw him down on the floor, and kicked him violently. Probably Muravieff would not have been obliged to wait to be hanged if it had not been for the Marshal of the Court, Benken-dorff, who, hearing the uproar in the Czar's study, rushed in and dragged the poor Dekabrist from under Nicholas's feet.

The Commission of Inquiry, selected from generals devoted to the Czar, met in the Petropavlosk fortress. The duty of the Commission was to ascertain the degree of guilt of every prisoner, as well as to discover and order the arrest of those who were yet at liberty. Naturally the Commission worked with the preconceived notion of finding everyone guilty. The Dekabrists did not open their lips, or if they did they mentioned no names. The Commission did not

approve of passive resistance, and tried to break it by torture, promises of reward, through priests sent to confess the prisoners and spies locked up in the same cells with the Dekabrists. Finally they decided to write down everything that was said during feverish slumber or mumbled under torture.

The report of the Commission grew in volume rapidly. In the meanwhile, two prisoners died from exhaustion, twelve of them went mad, thirty got black melancholy.

Nicholas I. grew impatient. St. Petersburg growled threateningly, for the best families had fathers, brothers, sons, and relations among the Dekabrists.

On May 30th, 1826, the Commission finished. On June 3rd the High Criminal Court began its sittings, during which the proceedings were reduced to the reading of the report, which each prisoner was asked to sign. There was no question of defence. The High Criminal Court divided all prisoners into eleven groups, and sentenced them to eleven degrees of punishment respectively.

Five Dekabrists were sentenced to be quartered, thirty-one to be beheaded, seventeen to be sent to katorga for life with "political ceremony" (consisting of the prisoners putting their heads on the block), two to katorga for life without such ceremony, sixteen for fifteen years of katorga and deportation to Siberia, five to ten years of katorga and deportation for life to Siberia, eight to six years of katorga and deportation for life to Siberia, fifteen to four years of katorga and deportation to Siberia for life,

eighteen to deportation for life to Siberia, and eight to thirty years' service in the ranks without any civil rights.

The sentence of death was without any foundation, for capital punishment was abolished by the Czarina Elizabeth, but the Russian High Criminal Court did not deem it necessary to pay any attention to a ukase of the Czar's grandmother.

However, the above sentences meant death for all of them, even for those who were going to serve in the ranks, for they were sent to the Caucasus, where the Circassians were fiercely defending their independence and annihilating the Russian regiments as fast as they could.

One of the purposes of this harsh, merciless retribution was to furnish the new Czar with an opportunity of showing his magnanimity. Therefore the five greatest culprits were allowed to change quartering for hanging. Those who were sentenced to be beheaded were permitted to go to katorga for life ; while those who were to serve with hard labour in the mines for life were sent there for twenty years only.

Russia trembled with indignation, for even five years of katorga and living in the Polar regions with *Yakucs* in their *yurtas* meant death—not violent, it is true, but death all the same. The carrying out of the sentence depended on the goodwill of the officials, as was proved in the case of Batiengkoff, who was sentenced to katorga, but was kept twenty years in the Petropavlosk fortress before he was sent to Siberia.

It was sheer murder of one hundred and twenty-five young, moral, highly honourable men,

some of them already distinguished by their brilliant qualities. Among those one hundred and twenty-five unfortunate people there were eight princes, six counts, three barons, while the rest belonged to the best families of *boyars*—noblemen. Other distinguished victims were two generals, twenty-three colonels, a State secretary, some chamberlains, and many high officials enjoying the best reputation.

Russia and its capital were helpless witnesses of that vengeance, for Nicholas had already at his command an army of spies and policemen. He had already laid the foundation for the worst kind of tyranny. Already Alexander Benken-dorff was the chief of police, and was organising the famous—or rather infamous—"third division of the Imperial Chancery," and working hard to deserve a count's coronet.

July 14th, 1826, the day of the downfall of the Bastille, the holy day of the free and great France, was for Russia the day of triumph for brute force, for merciless injustice, for cold-blooded murder, for it was the day of the execution of the Dekabrists. At daybreak one hundred and twenty of the prisoners were gathered in the square of the fortress, divested of their uniforms (which were put on just for that ceremony), and their swords were broken over their heads; next they were dressed in convict garb, and had their heads shaved. The Dekabrists budged not, and looked indifferent. Lunin alone, when they read to him that he was sentenced to twenty years of katorga, said to his comrades, "*Messieurs, la belle sentence doit être arrosée*"—and he did it.

General Chernisheff, who managed "the ceremony," reported the Dekabrists' indifference to the Czar, who, although it was three o'clock in the morning, was unable to sleep.

When "the ceremony" was over, General Chernisheff commanded the square of soldiers, surrounding the prisoners, to move towards the gate of the fortress. The column had made a few hundred steps when one of the prisoners noticed the gallows. A growling was heard among the Dekabrists, followed by a command in French to disarm the soldiers.

General Chernisheff, who wished to surprise the prisoners by showing them how their comrades were hanged, heard the command; and understanding French (proof of which he had given when he stole Napoleon's plans) he perceived the danger of a fight with desperate men, and ordered them back to the fortress.

Almost at the same time, Pestel, Ryliev, Muravieff, Bestuzhev, and Kahovski were standing bravely under the gallows. Pestel looked at the gibbet and said, "*C'est trop!*" Ryliev prayed for Russia, Muravieff whispered something to Kahovski; Bestuzhev, who was but eighteen years old, and who, according to law, was not punishable, stood quietly.

The ropes were put round the prisoners' necks, the hangman pressed the spring, and the floor on which they stood opened; two bodies remained suspended, three others fell through the opening of the scaffold.

General-Governor Kutuzoff ordered that new ropes should be brought. Pestel, Ryliev, and

Kahovski were brought from the pit, bleeding from wounds received from the fall. Pestel groaned ; Ryliev whispered painfully, " It's too bad ! " ; Kahovski was senseless. The trap was shut, the ropes were fixed, and the prisoners were again hanged ; but Pestel's rope was too long. The unfortunate man rested on a beam of the scaffold, which prevented instantaneous death, and made him suffer agonies.

At the end of half an hour the physician reported to General Kutuzoff that life was extinct, and the bodies were cut down. There was still a wheezing in Pestel's throat, but they paid no attention to it ; the corpses were put in sacks provided with stones, and thrown into the sea.

Besides sworn conspirators, there were also soldiers—three whole regiments. In the first place they were decimated by the artillery in the Senate Square ; then, without any investigation or trial, those who looked the strongest were selected and drowned in the sea ; a party of them were sent to Siberia, and the rest were put in the Senate Square.

Nicholas appeared before them in the *rôle* of Czar-father and shouted : " Kneel down ! "

The unfortunate wretches, wishing to save their necks from the rope, fell down on their faces before the Czar and he pardoned them magnanimously.

Europe throughout resounded with admiration for the Czar's good-heartedness, and praises in his favour were still heard while those who were apparently pardoned perished one by one, killed by the Circassians. In that way all the

rebels were annihilated. And that bloody tragedy, notwithstanding its awe, passed without being noticed! Nobody thought of it! Europe did not pay any attention to the Dekabrists—so called because their attempt was in December (in Russian, "*Dekabr*," hence the name). Not a word of sympathy was said in their favour!

All eyes were turned towards Nicholas, who was then the rising sun. The Dekabrists were crushed, and Nicholas said boastfully that he cured Russia from blood poison. The Czar said in 1826, "It is the end!" History shook katorga's chains and answered, "It is only the beginning!"

History was right, for it was then the beginning of the emancipation of the Russian people.

That movement, once manifested, was bound to go on, for the motion of human thought is similar to that of a body in space: it cannot be stopped, for it does not allow itself to be reached by earthly gravitation. One can make that movement less harmful by moving with it, one can utilise it as one does the forces of a waterfall, but one cannot stop it, for one can kill a man, but one cannot kill his thought.

It is impossible to quench spirit by the knout and katorga!

CHAPTER X

Nicholas I. takes off the mask—What was his ideal ?—He violates the Polish constitution—The Grand Duke Constantine and the Poles in 1830—Nicholas increases his army and obliges other European States to increase theirs—Revolution of 1848 and Nicholas's remedy for it—Why he poisoned himself—His religious intolerance—Alexander II. ascends the throne—His education and his quarrel with his brother Michael.

THE reign of Nicholas I. began by the decimation of the army and the people in the Senate Square, and was continued by the decimation of everything that seemed to the autocrat to be in his way.

Alexander I. deluded the Russians by mere words, he dazzled the whole of Europe by feigning Liberalism, but to the last moment of his life he had not the courage to frankly contradict the hopes that his people had in him.

Nicholas I. had no intention of following in his brother's steps, and if at the beginning of his reign he seemed to listen complacently to the allusions about a constitution and freedom, he was doing this from prudence, which recommended that he should strengthen the chains gradually.

Hardly had two years passed since his ascension to the throne, hardly had the last tremors of the revolutionary movement of the Dekabrists ceased in Orenburg and Moscow, when Nicholas I.

took off the mask and began to rule, not absolutely, but tyrannically.

As in the first place Nicholas was destined only to play the insignificant *rôle* of the Czar's brother, the part of the manikin participating in military manœuvres and reviews of the troops, his education was that of the barracks, of an officer of low rank. When Constantine renounced the crown in Nicholas's favour it was too late to educate a grown-up man, especially when that man cared nothing for education.

Through his mother Nicholas I. was German, and he became still more Germanised, if this were possible, by his marriage with the daughter of the King of Prussia, who prompted him to select Frederick the Great for his ideal. This ideal Nicholas I. understood from its worst side, probably the most accessible to his mind, from the point of view of militarism and blind obedience. The young Czar's ruling was limited to the army and police, through which he fortified the autocracy and changed Russia into a machine.

That guiding thought of his policy found serious obstacles in the organisation of the Russian Empire, which, in 1826, included two constitutional states, the kingdom of Poland and the dukedom of Finland. The latter by its geographical position had very little in common with Russia, but the kingdom of Poland, uniting Russia with Europe, was bound to make the Russians think of a constitution, and prevented Nicholas from rooting out of his empire the thought of freedom. Consequently the Czar began to unscrupulously violate the Polish constitution.



Nicholas I.

NICHOLAS I.

The Grand Duke Constantine, who was then the viceroy of Poland, being a man of small intelligence, followed his brother's ideas, notwithstanding the influence of the Princess of Lovich, who, as a Polish lady, tried to win her husband for her country.

Poland began to seethe with indignation, and to plot against "the king." Constantine, who loved the Poles in his way, did not doubt that Nicholas wished them well, and became a tool of his brother's political terrorism, which he applied when the Poles began to complain. The Czar's oppression produced in Poland the revolution of 1830.

The revolution was, above all, directed against Constantine, whose life was in jeopardy during the first disorders in Warsaw. However, the revolutionists becoming magnanimous, like the Dekabrists, allowed Constantine not only to escape death, but also gave him a chance to go away at the head of his guards! This stupid magnanimity was the principal reason for the failure of the Poles to win back their freedom.

The Polish revolution lasted six months, during which several bloody battles were fought, and was quelled, notwithstanding the sympathy of Europe, by Nicholas I. This was a death-blow to the Polish constitution, and an excuse to extend over Poland the reign of absolutism and tyranny.

In the meanwhile the Russians could hardly breathe under Nicholas's hard system. Continual wars made the country poor and scantily populated; the police demoralised the people; the

whiskey made beasts of them, while religious persecution made them hate even the Orthodox God.

The Czar tripled his army, forcing Europe to do the same, and was constantly planning new aggressive wars, which prevented the interior development of the country. Although war raged in the Caucasus, although blood was continually spilt in Poland, and especially in Lithuania, the belligerent Czar was not satisfied. Though the Russians trembled with indignation they dared not protest, for one imprudent word was sufficient for enrolling the man "for ever" (official contemporary expression) into the army, where for lack of a button on his uniform the culprit would receive a hundred blows of the knout, where sons were taught to spy on their fathers, where denunciation was considered a proof of loyalty. Then a protest was not sufficient, but the despair was bound to change into an element of annihilation.

Nicholas did not think of the future, did not think of measuring the abyss he was making between his throne and his people. To the uneducated ruler, to the shallow-minded autocrat, it did not matter that only half of the Russians wore a uniform; they all had to wear their whiskers in the same manner, and were driven to the Orthodox Church with the knout.

However, the revolutionary movement that was felt throughout Europe in 1848 made Nicholas uneasy, and he strengthened the influence of the police and of "the third division." In order to frighten the Russians and make them keep

quiet the Czar did not hesitate to send an army to help Austria in her struggle against the rebellious Hungarians.

In the meanwhile the reactionaries in Russia were building a protective wall round their country, so that the contagious revolutionary movement should not pass the Russian frontier. This system went so far that it was proposed to forbid Russian subjects to go abroad, where they could catch the disease and import it into the Czar's dominion.

Despite all those extraordinary measures the Russian constitution was tottering when the Crimean War broke out; then it was demonstrated how false was the whole military system.

Nicholas I. declared war, but the soldiers fought without enthusiasm, because it was nothing else to them than an autocratic command. Consequently they were not obliged to do anything more than act as would a soulless machine, that stops when there is something wrong with it, and cannot move any further by itself.

The Czar conducted the war personally from St. Petersburg; he issued orders and counter-orders; he beat with his own hands the unfortunate *feldjegers* who brought him bad news; he spat at the officers, slapped the faces of generals, cabinet ministers, and even his dear police. Thunderbolts followed thunderbolts, and the military fabric, erected by Nicholas I. at the cost of so many sacrifices, lay in ruins. The proud despot was mad with wrath and disappointment, and by his savage outbursts he made still more stupid the already stupid generals and Court

dignitaries who could not help being just as the Czar wished them to be, viz., brainless.

Helpless at last on account of the shameful conditions of peace, Nicholas I. poisoned himself. The one of whom Poleayeff said :

“ If, instead of the lantern
That glimmers in the dusk,
One could hang the despot Czar,
Then a ray of freedom would shine,”

took his own life.

Nicholas I., although a murderer like other Czars, was, after Paul I., the second Russian ruler who was not a regicide.

Nicholas I. was one of the most tyrannical Czars ; in violating the natural laws of his subjects, he surpassed even Peter I. He not only annihilated the liberal movement started and encouraged by Alexander I., but revived the influence of obscurantism which prevailed in the times of Elizabeth and Anna, and started the most fierce religious persecution.

Thousands of Catholics, Units, Protestants, Jews, and Mohammedans, were, through his orders, driven by blows of the knout to the Orthodox Church, while those of his own faith were forbidden, under penalty of *katorga*, to change their religion ; the religious ceremonies were celebrated merely to glorify the Czar ; the confession was superintended by police, and the affairs of the Church were controlled by a colonel.

On March 2nd, 1855, Nicholas's son, Alexander, ascended the throne of all the Russias. Alexander II. was born in 1818, before his father

was recognised as the successor to the throne, and when the vocation of the son of a Grand Duke was to play but the modest part of the Czar's cousin. For this reason the Court had not troubled much about the young Alexander, and so he escaped being corrupted.

Only when Constantine resigned in favour of Nicholas was the attention of the Court turned to Alexander, who then became Czarevitch. Generals Merder and Ushakoff, and the author Zukovski were appointed his tutors. The first two endeavoured to graft on the Czarevitch the ideals of militarism; the latter, a writer of some merit, but not a profound thinker, although not lacking in noble flights, gave to Alexander as a motto through life: "Freedom and order." We do not know how Zukovski understood that motto, but history tells us how it was applied by Alexander II., whose reign was a series of vacillations and contradictions often quite illogical.

Alexander was proclaimed heir-apparent in 1831, six years after Nicholas's accession to the throne, for the Czar had intended to leave the Imperial crown to his younger son Constantine.

While Nicholas was alive, Alexander and Constantine quarrelled over their claims. Constantine maintained that as Alexander was born when Nicholas was but a Grand Duke, he had not the right to be successor to the throne, which should be his (Constantine's), for he was born after their father had been crowned.

That quarrel was not abandoned even when Alexander was officially proclaimed heir-apparent, in fact it was so serious that Nicholas, indepen-

dently of his last will, in which Alexander was named successor, made Constantine swear that he would not interfere with his brother in regard to the crown.

Constantine was faithful to his oath and recognised Alexander II. as Czar. In the meanwhile, however, he became the head of the party called "Constantinovichs," which means the Grand Dukes who are fond of showing their liberalism and are not admitted to the government of Russia. They are not much in favour with the Russian rulers.

Alexander II., while he was the successor to the throne, was, naturally, obliged to follow blindly his father's wishes, to concentrate his intelligence on the military manœuvres, on uniforms and military discipline, pushed in Russia to extremes. Notwithstanding that, Alexander, while still Czarevitch, aroused in the nation some hopes of a better future. Those hopes were so great that Nicholas I. deemed it proper, prudent, and necessary to have his son and successor to the throne carefully watched by "the third division of the Imperial Chancery."

Alexander II. was great-grandson of Catherine, Duchess of Anhalt-Zerbst, grandson of Dorothy, Duchess of Würtemberg, and son of Caroline of Prussia; in the male line he was grandson of Paul I. and great-grandson of the Duke of Holstein-Gottorp (Peter III.)—in a word, setting aside all "complications" in regard to the descent of the last two, it is impossible to find in Alexander's veins even a drop of the blood of the Romanoffs.

Nicholas I. died on March 2nd, 1855. Not till three days after did Moscow learn of his death, and a day later the people took the oath, when, it was said, a bell resounded of itself in the old Ivan tower. The superstitious Russians saw in that a bad sign for the future reign. The Russian censor forbade anyone to speak about the improper behaviour of the bell, in consequence of which the prestige of that omen was increased.

CHAPTER XI

Who are the Nihilists?—Russian official definition of a Nihilist—Herzen and his publication called "Kolokol"—Alexander's difficulties in reorganising the Russian Empire—Reforms introduced by the Czar—Karakozoff's attempt on Alexander's life—Muravieff's cruelty—Shuvaloff at the head of the Government—Berezovski fires at Alexander in Paris—The Origin of "Narodnaja Vola" and murders committed by its members—Numerous murders of officials—Attempts on Alexander's life.

IN Russian history 1855 is memorable because in that year nihilism was originated.

What is nihilism?

According to the definition of an encyclopædia, nihilism is a kind of philosophical system rejecting all higher moral, political, and social principles, accepting only the existence of matter and the infallibility of experiments. Nihilism is a negation not only of law, government, and state, but of God as well.

Nihilism was never able to rule any group of people, and it is a sickly and involuntary consequence of the materialistic pessimism of individuals rather than a logical theory of association.

Whence came nihilism in Russia?

The most positive answer is that there never was any nihilism in Russia, and that the Russian nihilists never had any connection with the theories of nihilism. The Russian police, wishing to disgust Russia as well as Europe with the people demanding political reforms, such as were intro-

duced in other European states, called them nihilists. This appellation was taken from Turgenieff, who, in one of his stories, bestowed that name on socialists or, more precisely speaking, on the intellectual paupers.

“Nihilist” was the name picked up by the French press as a *mot du jour*, and was made popular; but it was not correct, for so-called nihilists in Russia demanded nothing more than a constitution, or at least a convocation of the representatives of the nation with the power of introducing some reforms.

If nihilism, accepted, according to the European press, as a philosophical Utopia, could prevent some narrow-minded burghers from sleeping, it certainly became a bugbear to the peaceful citizens of the Russian Empire, because of the official definition of a nihilist, published in 1865.

The circular of the Russian police stated that a nihilist—should it be a woman—does not wear hoops, *alias* crinolines; has her hair cut short, and wears a fur cap. Be it a man, his hair is long, and he wears blue eyeglasses. The director of the Moscow police sent round to his subalterns the following circular:

“Whereas should you meet in the streets individuals who dare to wear the costume of the nihilists, we order that you should force the nihilists living in your district to discard blue eyeglasses, round caps, and to have their hair cut—this concerns the men; as to the women, they must not have their hair cut, and must wear crinolines. In case the nihilists of your district do not conform with this regulation, they are to

be deported from Moscow within twenty-four hours. Every policeman is authorised to arrest the nihilists and to enforce the present order."

This authentic document characterises well the notion of the Russian police in regard to the nihilists. The crowning effort of the police was to teach the Russians practically how dreadful a plague were the nihilists. Two weeks after the first attempt on the Czar Alexander's life, a symbolistic nihilist, represented by a disguised policeman, who wore an enormous wig, a round fur cap, and check clothes, while his nose was ornamented with several pairs of blue eyeglasses, was paraded in the streets of Moscow. This burlesque nihilist shook a stout stick and pattered, "I am a nihilist! I am a socialist! I murdered my father! I will eat up my mother! I will burn everything! I will murder everybody! I believe not in God!"

This was in 1866 in Europe.

Who were really the so-called Russian nihilists? At first they were neither revolutionists nor even conspirators. They were the seekers of reforms, who turned socialists and then in sheer despair became terrorists and social-revolutionists. The origin of so-called nihilism was in the abuses of the police; in religious persecution; in the teaching of Hegel and Marx, of Mill and St. Simon; in the darkness overwhelming Russia; and in the light coming from the West.

The Russian nihilists would not follow Bakunin; he was too violent for them. The spiritual father of the nihilists in Russia was

Herzen, son of a Moscow millionaire. Herzen received a very good education, which, completed by travel, opened his eyes to the miserable lot of his fellow-men and prompted him to work for their liberation. When, after his father's death, he came into a very large fortune, he settled in London in 1854.

Two years later the first number of *Kolokol* appeared, calling the Russians to fight absolutism. *Kolokol*, notwithstanding all the efforts of the Russian police, was widely read in Russia, and began to wake the people up.

Through the medium of a pamphlet called "Who Is Guilty?" Herzen made Russia shiver. Chernishevski answered the question soberly, asking "What shall we do?" while Bakunin clenched his fists and pointed out the infernal machines.

In the meanwhile, Alexander II. was ruling, and apparently had promised to improve the condition of things. In 1856, when the manifesto on the occasion of the Coronation was published, Europe was in raptures because of the many great favours therein bestowed on the Russians. By that manifesto all the Dekabrists were pardoned, together with revolutionary Poles and all other Russians who were mixed up in any kind of revolutionary propaganda; besides which the Czar made a present to the Russian peasants of twenty-three million roubles. This manifesto convinced the Czar himself about his own munificence, although it contained but empty words.

The Dekabrists hardly existed then, for very few of them could stand thirty years of working

in mines—katorga. Consequently, the amnesty reached only about a dozen half-dead men. As to the Poles, the majority of them refused to leave Siberia only, as they feared, to be sent back again. The present of taxes in arrears was simply imaginary, for those twenty-three million roubles were due from people either already dead or entirely ruined; therefore the striking out of that amount from the bookkeeping of the government meant merely less work for the officials, who were not obliged any longer to count the imaginary interest, and thus to increase fancy debts.

Alexander II. seemed to be pleased with himself and with his first step towards liberal institutions. The Russians pretended to be satisfied, and lived peacefully through the first year of Alexander's reign, expecting to see any day the realisation of their hopes.

It must be stated that Alexander's task was not easy, for the Russian Empire was almost ruined, the interior development of the country crippled by the consequences of the Crimean War, all the State-springs rusty or broken, and, worst of all, Alexander II. had no capable men round him; for after his father's death there were left only narrow-minded, half-barbarous generals, made savage by the too severe military discipline, who were accustomed to believe in the Czar's infallibility.

Any Czar with less than Alexander's capacity would have failed. That capacity some people were pleased to call hypocrisy, others vacillation, still others masked absolutism; but all those names do not do away with the fact that

Alexander II. was capable. Whether Alexander was conscious or not of being a capable man, remains an open question. The result, however, was there, for notwithstanding everything, Alexander II. preserved absolutism for his son, while making the world believe that he was a ruler disposed to make concessions, but who was prevented from accomplishing these important reforms by disturbing elements; who on the eve of his death signed a constitution which he would have granted a long time previously if the Russians had been mature for it.

That excuse was not new: Nicholas I. was fond of using it. "The Russians are not mature for a constitution!" As if constitutions were not one of the factors of development, as if France and England were not indebted to constitution for their social, economical, and political progress; as if the Russian peasants were more stupid than were the French when they burst into the Revolution; as if one could learn how to dance before he knew how to walk!

Alexander II., however—sincerely or not, willingly or not—was obliged to introduce some reforms, as, for instance, the abolition of serfdom. This reform, introduced to the detriment of large landowners, from whom land was taken away and given to the landless peasants, served in the meanwhile as a means of arousing hatred towards those who possessed large estates. The peasants were going to look hereafter on the Czar as their redeemer, and to forget that it was Peter I. who made them slaves, that all his successors were opposed to the freedom of the people. The Russian

peasants, looking at the abuses committed by the officials as they were distributing land to them, began to believe that the whole of the land belonged to the peasants; that such was the Czar's will, but that the lords cheated him and them.

These whimsical ideas of the Russian peasants not only were never corrected, but they were carefully encouraged and preserved on the principle of *divide et impera*, in order to serve as a weapon against the upper classes.

The important reform which in 1861 at last abolished slavery in Europe met with the Polish rebellion. The Poles having been driven to desperation by Nicholas's cruel system, continued under liberal Alexander, took up arms. Europe resounded with sympathy for Poland; the majority of the Russians were friendly disposed towards the Poles, and even Alexander II. was inclined to make some concessions. All at once the Czar, who till then had shown a tendency to freedom, became the head of the reactionary movement, and let loose against the Poles the rest of Nicholas's savage militarism. Thousands of them were shot, thousands hanged, thousands sent to Siberia, thousands left the country.

The cruelty with which the Polish rebellion was crushed showed Alexander II. in his true light, even to the Russians. The Czar's administrative changes were but the clever work of a tamer and breeder of lions. Russia grew larger and stronger, consequently the cage was made bigger and stouter. Apparently some important reforms were about to be introduced. Almost

every day there was talk of bringing from Western Europe some better form of government, of the necessity of spreading enlightenment, etc., but every day the followers of the autocrat were thinking only how to cut such and such a reform, according to the measure of absolutism, without hurting any of its privileges.

In that way the ostensible ameliorations introduced by Alexander II. were mere parodies. For instance, what was the use of introducing reforms into law courts? What was the use of improving the Russian code, if through Alexander's command every governor had the power of sending anybody he pleased to Siberia without any legal proceedings against him? What was the use of abolishing censorship if the newspapers were watched by a police committee with the power of suppressing the edition or of suspending the publication should the editor put in something which the government did not like? To what amounted the ostensible freedom of the press in 1867, during three months of which there was not one paper sent out to the provinces from St. Petersburg?

In the meanwhile Herzen's clarion was sounded in London, and its echoes were heard throughout Russia. In 1860 Bakunin, who succeeded in escaping from katorga, settled on the banks of the Thames.

The bloody list of the victims of the reactionary government began in 1861 with the hanging of a peasant named Petroff for heading the rebellion in Kazan. Petroff was followed by Michailoff and Ogareff. In 1862 there were eight political

trials which resulted in three men being shot and many sent to katorga.

During the following three years there were thirteen political trials, through which five men were shot and thirty-six sent to katorga. They were Russians. Besides these, thousands of Poles were exiled to Siberia. The Poles at least were conscious of fighting for their freedom, while the Russians were victims of a terrorism which was difficult to excuse, for they were not guilty of doing anything violent against the government, but were sent to Siberia merely for reading a forbidden book, for censuring the abuses of the officials, for wearing round caps, long hair, and blue eyeglasses.

At last the mercilessness of the official terrorism aroused the thought amongst the persecuted that instead of dying like flies they should resist and at least die fighting.

On April 16th, 1866, the first attempt on Alexander's life was made. It was the first effort in Russia to kill a ruler that was not prompted by egotistical and personal advantages, as had invariably been the case until then. That attempt was made by a student, a certain Dimitri Karakozoff; it was not a very complicated affair, for although the Czar was watched by the detectives, they did not surround him with a cordon of guards as they do now.

Alexander II. was following his usual custom of walking in the Summer Gardens in St. Petersburg; the gardens were watched by the police; the Czar was followed by his suite; Karakozoff stood quietly in an alley, and when Alexander

was passing he took off his cap, then pulling out a pistol, fired at the monarch, missed him, and was arrested.

Russia trembled with indignation. The attempt aroused hundreds of surmises. Amongst them the most striking was that it was incited by the Czar's brother Constantine, the supposition being based on the ground that in murderous Russia the killing of a ruler had always until then been done for the purpose of seizing the crown, and that it was always instigated by someone connected with the dynasty and the Court.

This supposition was strengthened by the behaviour of Karakozoff, who refused to make any confession, pretended to be a Pole, then a German, wished to keep his name secret, and did not mention any accomplices.

Alexander II., surprised by the incident, had no idea of being magnanimous, and appointed General Muravieff to investigate the affair. This was the same Muravieff who had made himself infamous by the atrocious cruelties he perpetrated in Lithuania, and who came to St. Petersburg with the title of count; granted him by the Czar, and with the nickname of "hangman," given to him by the people.

Muravieff applied his experience to Karakozoff, but neither promises of pardon nor threats of torture were of any use; the student was silent, or told cock-and-bull stories. He tried to open a vein with his teeth. The stubborn man was encompassed with special care by Muravieff. He was bound with chains which united his left hand with the right foot and the right hand with

the left foot ; also his hands and feet were bound together. The chains crossed on an iron belt from which a rope was fastened to the back of his neck ; this rope was to prevent the prisoner from bending his head towards his hands.

Thus bound, Karakozoff was put on a bed standing in the centre of a large, well-lighted, and softly-carpeted room in the Imperial Chancery. The bed was surrounded day and night by four policemen, commanded by an officer ; they watched the prisoner, and prevented him from sleeping ; as soon as Karakozoff closed his eyes, the policemen pinched and tickled him. Every few hours he was dragged to Muravieff, who would order him to be beaten and then to be taken to a physician, who applied soothing remedies.

Karakozoff could not stand such torture much longer, and determined to starve himself to death by refusing food. Muravieff, however, had a remedy for that, too ; the prisoner's mouth was forcibly opened and liquid food introduced through a tube.

Muravieff was mad with anger, for, notwithstanding numerous arrests, and torture of prisoners, he could not learn anything, for the simple reason that innocent victims had nothing to tell. At last a mere accident helped Muravieff to learn at least the name of the student. Before the attempt Karakozoff went to the Znamenski Hotel, where he occupied room No. 65. When the occupier of that room disappeared, the owner of the hotel did not connect his absence with the attempt on the Czar's life, but when the young

man did not return for several days the hotel-keeper was alarmed, and notified the police. His fears were increased by the circumstance that Karakozoff did not deposit his passport when occupying the room, as the police regulations required. The police rushed to search the room, where they found some linen only, in a box, and small pieces of paper on the floor. The pieces were put together, and were found to form an addressed envelope. An order was immediately issued to arrest in Moscow a student named Ishutin, as well as all his friends and acquaintances. Ishutin was brought to St. Petersburg by a special train. When confronted with Karakozoff he could not help uttering a cry of pained surprise at the sight of his poor friend.

The authorities having learned who Karakozoff was, the next question was to find his accomplices. They arrested several hundred persons of both sexes, and after cruel torturing and a most strange investigation they found eighteen people guilty of "belonging to a society the aim of which was an economical revolution." Karakozoff was hanged. Ishutin was imprisoned in Schlüsselburg, where he died. The others were transported to Siberia, their only offence being that they were acquainted with nihilists.

Amongst those connected with Karakozoff's attempt, one should mention a peasant named Komisareff, who was near Karakozoff at the moment he fired at the Czar. The story runs that he seized the student by the hand and made him miss his mark. The peasant was proclaimed the Czar's saviour, and as such was munifi-

cently rewarded. Society people deemed it their duty to show their loyalty towards the Czar by feasting and entertaining Komisareff and his wife. The poor peasant, stupefied by wealth and honours, went mad and hanged himself.

Karakozoff's attempt produced a furious reaction, which resulted in an increase of the police, the dismissal of the ministers of public instruction, and of the interior, and the appointment to their posts of savage men, who proposed to root out all revolutionary aspirations. The persecutions continued, and reached almost everyone who did not wear uniform.

Those numerous arrests, those continual prosecutions, failed to reach those who were the real power; all the spies of the government were unable to discover that within Russia there existed a powerful organisation, "*Ziemia i Wola*," that was raising up in Russia a generation of regicides.

Peter Shuvaloff, whom Alexander II. trusted implicitly, and who was able to make "the third division of the Imperial Chancery" as dreadful as the Inquisition under Torquemada, was head of the government. The whole of Russia trembled at the mere thought of "the third division," for the police were merciless when it became a question of removing someone in Shuvaloff's way.

Alexander II., although aware of his favourite's tyranny, did not think of removing him. The Czar was then interested in love intrigues and in easy drawing-room triumphs amongst the ladies of the Court. He was glad that Shuvaloff's

energy relieved him of the burden of his position and silenced the liberal outbursts that reached the Winter Palace.

Shuvaloff sent thousands of suspected people to Siberia without trial. His terrorism seemed to be an efficacious remedy against the "blood poison," because, for a certain time, there was nothing heard of the nihilists.

In 1867 Alexander went to Paris to visit the Exhibition and to remove the grievances which Napoleon had against him on account of the cruelty displayed during the Polish rebellion. The Russian autocrat met with some unexpected unpleasantness on the banks of the Seine. In the first place, Charles Floquet—according to Jules Claretie it was Leon Gambetta—greeted the Czar in front of the Law Court building by shouting "*Vive la Pologne!*" and a few days later, when Alexander was coming back from a military review in Longchamps, a Polish emigrant, Berezowski, fired at him but missed. The unsuccessful assassin was apprehended and tried.

Inquiries disclosed no associates, and it was proved that the Pole acted of his own accord, wishing to avenge thousands of his innocent countrymen sent to Siberia in 1863. The French judges were kindly inclined towards Berezowski, but law and Russian diplomacy had to be satisfied, and he was sentenced to deportation for life, at which the bloodthirsty Russian ambassador was indignant, for he demanded Berezowski's head. However, this time political sympathy carried a greater weight than diplomacy, even in the Tuileries.

Forty-one years passed and Berezowski, through his good behaviour, was released. To-day he is a quiet settler in New Caledonia. Forty-one years of punishment for one futile shot is perhaps too much. Berezowski had a right to pardon, and would have been pardoned if politics had not interfered with the Presidents of the Third Republic, who feared to hurt the feelings of Alexander's grandson.

After 1867 everything was quiet for a certain time amongst the Russian conspirators, who worked hard at their interior reorganisation. "Ziemia i Vola" became a power. Katorga, torturing, and hanging aroused enthusiasm and desire for martyrdom amongst those people desirous of serving the good cause; the theorists and dreamers became more and more inclined to relinquish their scruples and to act. Irritated by the continual persecution of the police, a group of the revolutionaries severed themselves from the main body and determined to answer terrorism by terrorism. In that way "Narodnaja Vola" was originated, and the members were not long in showing what they proposed to do.

The bloody list of "Narodnaja Vola" began with the murder of four most zealous spies: Tavlejeff in Odessa, Sharashkin and Finogepoff in St. Petersburg, and Nikonoff in Rostoff.

Shortly after that Viera Zasulich determined to kill the notorious tyrant Trepoff. She asked him for an audience, during which she fired at the savage chief of the police; her hand was not steady, and the bullet missed Trepoff. Zasulich was imprisoned. The attempt made by a young

and honourable girl on the life of a tyrant aroused sympathy for the prisoner. In order to appease public opinion Viera Zasulich was tried by a jury, the government being certain that an attempt on life would be punished. They were mistaken, for the girl was found not guilty.

The reactionaries howled with wrath, and obtained from the Czar an order for Viera Zasulich's arrest. She was warned in time, however, and crossed the Russian frontier. She is living in Geneva, where she publishes a revolutionary paper, *Iskra*, in which she has often abused Trepoff's son.

Viera Zasulich's attempt was in February of 1878; it marked the beginning of the fighting between white and red terrorism. The same month the executive committee of "Narodnaja Vola" began to issue death warrants.

Those warrants, distributed in thousands of copies, won for the nihilists not only sympathy, but also numerous partisans. They frightened the police, spies, and officials. The executions followed the warrants, and they were so numerous that it would be too tedious to enumerate the names of those who were murdered.

On April 14th, 1879, another attempt was made on the Czar's life. After Karakozoff's shot, Alexander II. was well watched. He gave up his walks in the Summer Gardens; he showed himself very seldom in the streets, and on these occasions was always well guarded by the troops. When the executive committee of "Narodnaja Vola" sent to the Czar a death warrant, the precautions were increased. However, Alexander

Solovieff succeeded in passing the line of the police in the Winter Palace Square, where the Czar was taking his daily walk. Wearing the uniform of an official, Solovieff easily came near to the Czar and fired at him. He missed and fired again. Alexander ran towards the Palace. Solovieff followed him and fired three times, but as Alexander ran in zigzags none of Solovieff's bullets found its mark.

Solovieff was arrested, imprisoned, tortured, and hanged.

After that new means were necessary to root out nihilism ; therefore governors became masters of the life of the people. Hundreds perished in prisons ; thousands were sent to Siberia ; there was a spy in every house in St. Petersburg.

But the revolutionary executive committee would not give up their aims, for they had at their command men full of intelligence, men who were determined to risk their lives for the good cause.

CHAPTER XII

Two more attempts on Alexander's life—Manifesto of "Narodnaja Vola"—Chalturin and his plan of blowing up the Winter Palace—Zelaboff and Chalturin—Why the Czar and his family were not blown up—The effect of the attempt in the Winter Palace—Loris Melikoff at the head of the Government—Młodecki's shot at Loris Melikoff—Hartman and the efforts of the Russian diplomacy against him.

IN 1879 Alexander II. spent the autumn in the south of Russia. Only when sixteen nihilists had been hanged and five had been killed by torture ; when twenty-two political trials seemed to permit one to believe that the revolutionaries would keep quiet, at least for a time ; only then did he resolve to return to the capital.

Two mines were waiting for the Imperial train ; the first, laid on the line of Lozovo-Sebastopol railway, did not explode on account of a fault in the clockwork which was to set it off ; the second, prepared by Hartman on the Moscow-Kursk railway, in case the first should fail, was exact to the minute. The Imperial train was wrecked, but the Czar was not killed. He was saved by those who watched over him, and who, fearing some mischief, induced Alexander to take the first train instead of the second as was arranged. Thus, when the explosion of the mine shattered to pieces the second train, in which the Czar was supposed to travel, and killed all his attendants, Alexander was already in Moscow.

Those two attempts, although not successful, made a very deep impression on Alexander II., who for the first time, in spite of his autocratic ideas, appealed to his subjects for help against those who encouraged disorder. The Czar's manifesto was answered by that of "Narodnaja Vola," in which it was stated that as the Czar was the principal cause of official terrorism, he must die, and he would do so before March 2nd, 1880. However, the death warrant was not to be executed if the Czar abdicated and submitted to the representatives of the people.

"Narodnaja Vola," while publishing the manifesto, had already at their service in the Winter Palace one of whom they were certain. This man was a certain Chalturin, whose devotion to the party verged on madness, his only aim in life being to murder the Czar. Chalturin conceived and carried out a plan which, by its daring, surpassed all attempts ever made.

This man was a cabinet-maker and French-polisher. He joined a socialistic society of artisans, and for several years was a very zealous propagandist. An intelligent, industrious, and good workman, given entirely to the cause of the improvement of the artisans' lot, Chalturin became very popular and respected. In 1877 the official terrorism made a deep impression on Chalturin, who came to the conclusion that only the Czar's murder would be likely to influence his successor to make some concessions. Seeing how unsuccessful were all attempts made on the Czar, Chalturin determined to try his luck, and to this end he made an astonishingly bold plan, which he

submitted to the executive committee, by whom it was approved.

Through his connection and reputation of being a very skilful artisan, Chalturin got the post of French-polisher on the Imperial yacht, where he worked so diligently and proved himself to be such an able man, that he was taken to the Winter Palace and employed there in the cabinet-makers' shop of the Imperial residence.

Chalturin's first efforts were to become familiar with the plan of the Palace, which was not difficult, for the Czar and his family were in Livadia and the Palace resounded with the revelry of the servants. Chalturin had had a false passport issued in the name of a peasant from Oloniec, and he played his part admirably. He wondered at everything so well that his comrades, familiar with the Court, were pleased to show him the riches of the Czar's apartments, to teach him how he should behave when the Czar was there, how to answer the courtiers, and what titles to give to this one and that one. Chalturin seemed to the servants of the Palace to be a blockhead; everybody laughed at his simplicity; they were fond of him, and called him "the simpleton from Oloniec."

In the meantime the simpleton had the plan of the Palace ready, from which it appeared that over the cabinet-makers' workshop there was a guard-room, which was the Czar's dining-room. Chalturin communicated this information to the executive committee, and he proposed to blow up the Palace when the Czar was dining with his family. This plan was accepted.

Chalturin would have at once started to make preparations to execute his project if news had not been received that the Czar was coming to St. Petersburg, which necessitated great haste in getting the apartments ready for him. So busy was Chalturin kept that when the Czar arrived in the Winter Palace nothing had been done towards the proposed attempt.

The proposed task, however, almost surpassed the strength and energy of one man. When the Czar came to the capital, it happened that a member of the executive committee, named Kwiatkowski, was arrested. In his possession was found the plan of the Palace, made by Chalturin, with a red cross showing the position of the dining-room. The police were in a commotion, and they tried persistently to find out what that red cross meant ; but even the most cruel torture could not make Kwiatkowski speak. Naturally, the whole Palace was minutely searched, and the number of the police doubled. In the work-room of the cabinet-makers a policeman was posted, watching Chalturin and his comrades day and night. It was also ordered that the rooms of the servants should be searched every day and every night.

During this time Chalturin was in continual communication with the revolutionaries through Zelaboff, and succeeded in obtaining some dynamite. One can easily imagine the conspirator's fear when the same night several policemen entered the workshop and made a search. Chalturin needed all his presence of mind not to betray himself. The search was made, but they found

nothing, the dynamite having been deposited under Chalturin's pillows.

These night searches were continual; the dynamite remained under the pillows, and was not discovered. Chalturin became accustomed to these descents and ceased to be frightened.

Kibalchich, the chemist of the executive committee, calculated that for blowing up the Palace one hundred and twenty pounds of dynamite were required. Such a considerable quantity was necessary because Chalturin could not make a mine in the wall and give to the explosion the needed strength and direction. The personal searches to which Chalturin was subject every time he returned to the Palace obliged him to convey the dynamite in a small quantity only, and it took a considerable time to get one hundred and twenty pounds.

In addition to all these difficulties Chalturin was suffering seriously. Nitro-glycerine evaporated from the dynamite and produced a poisonous gas which caused Chalturin to be subject to bad headaches and nervous attacks. He dared not show that he was ill, however, for fear of being sent to a hospital.

The tragedy conceived by Chalturin had its comical side. The simpleton from Oloniec became a great favourite with the policeman, who undertook to educate him and to make him a suitable husband for his daughter. From time to time there would be a discussion about the nihilists, who, according to the artisans of the Palace, were half devils. One day one of them said :

“ I would like to see a nihilist.”

Chalturin smiled. “ How could you recognise him ? He has not got it written on his forehead that he is a nihilist.”

Everybody in the room laughed, and the policeman scolded the simpleton :

“ How could you recognise him ? How stupid you are ! You can smell a nihilist ! And as soon as you smell him, run away as fast as you can, for before you can think he will throw something dishonest into your eyes ! ”

At last Chalturin had accumulated the necessary quantity of dynamite, which he kept in his box, for he could not hide one hundred and twenty pounds under his pillows. That box was nearly searched by the police, who, however, seeing Chalturin's stupidity, which was, of course, simulated, were satisfied with opening it and looking at the top of the contents.

The executive committee ordered Chalturin to act. The dynamite was to be left in the box, which was to be put under the bed, near the outside wall, and in that way serve as a cart-ridge. To ignite the dynamite the chemist Kibalchich made a glass tube, filled with a specially prepared composition which, at the crucial moment, was to be lighted by a fuse and the tube tightly closed with a cork and put into the box containing the dynamite. It was calculated that the time necessary for the tube to burst and ignite the dynamite was sufficient for Chalturin's escape.

When everything was ready it did not imply that the attempt could be made immediately, for

it was necessary to be able to light the tube without being seen by anybody; this was not easy, for the room was occupied in common by several artisans, to say nothing of the watchful policeman. Thus, although everything was in readiness, although the order of the committee was to explode the dynamite at a quarter past six in the evening—the time the Imperial family dined every day—Chalturin could not ignite the mine. Every day Chalturin was obliged to meet Zelaboff, who on the day of the explosion was to conduct him to a hiding-place. Every evening, for weeks, Zelaboff stood in the dusk at the farther end of the Winter Palace Square. Chalturin, looking at the ground, would pass him and mutter “Impossible,” and turn in another direction through fear of being spied on by the vigilant policemen.

At last, on February 17th, 1880, Chalturin said to Zelaboff quietly, “Ready!” Before Zelaboff could answer there resounded a tremendous explosion in the direction of the Winter Palace. All the lights went out suddenly, and the pall of death covered the Imperial residence.

Rapidly the empty square began to fill up with firemen, soldiers, and other people. The conspirators were obliged to run for their lives. Zelaboff brought Chalturin to his hiding-place, where, previously so fearless, he began to tremble at the thought that he might be captured, but became quieted when his comrade had shown him a large dynamite cartridge sufficient to blow up the whole house.

In the Winter Palace, before the explosion took place, the dining-room was ready for an unusually large number of guests, and in honour of the Prince Alexander of Battenberg the whole Imperial family was going to dine together. Alexander II. went to the station of the Warsaw-Petersburg railway to welcome his guest, who had just been elected to the throne of Bulgaria. On account of a heavy snowfall the train was considerably late. The Czar grew impatient at the delay. Nobody then thought how lucky was that tardy arrival of the train.

Dreadful was the result of the explosion ! The workshop, the room of the guards, and the dining-room were blown clean out. Sixty people were buried under the *débris*, forty more were frightfully wounded. All the soldiers of the guard were killed ; also the lackeys, pages, and several old officials of the Court.

One can imagine the Czar's fright when, a few minutes after the explosion, he came to the dark Palace, for although he heard the noise he probably did not imagine that it came from the Winter Palace.

Alexander II. trembled when he conducted his guests to the side apartment, where the Imperial family were sitting by the candle-light, full of awe. The winter wind blew from the Neva through the broken windows and made the cut-glass of the chandeliers tinkle.

When Chalturin learned that " he " was alive, he fell on his bed, broken down by disappointment at so much hard work being lost. For weeks he was the victim of fever and remorse

that he was the cause of the death of so many people.

Did they inquire in the Palace what became of "the simpleton from Oloniec"? It is hardly likely. The police came to the conclusion that the explosion was due to a mine, and that the one who had laid and ignited it had perished. They thought it was done by one of the guards.

Chalturin went to Odessa, where nobody knew him, and where he would have died quietly if it had not been for his revolutionary activity. Two years later he was arrested, notwithstanding a stubborn resistance on his part, on the day the Procurator Strelnikoff was murdered, and was hanged. Did they know in Odessa that it was Chalturin who blew up the Winter Palace? Probably they did, for the chronicles of the nihilists mention that one of the revolutionaries could not stand the torture, and "spoke."

Two days after the explosion in the Winter Palace the executive committee issued another manifesto announcing new attempts.

Alexander II., on his part, replied by still more cruel and merciless persecution, which, according to his idea, was the only means to stop the revolutionary propaganda. The direction of the State affairs was intrusted to Boris Melikoff, and although officially his titles were not decided, he had the power of a dictator and his influence over the Czar was shared with the Court-minister, the Count Alexander Adelberg, nicknamed Alexander III.

Alexander II. had intended to celebrate, three weeks after the Winter Palace explosion, the

twenty-fifth anniversary of his accession to the throne, but he now wished to abandon, or at least to postpone the affair. Loris Melikoff did not agree to this, and the Czar gave way ; but he did not appear in the street procession, and the Palace was surrounded by numerous troops.

Two days after the festivities Mlodecki fired at Loris Melikoff. When he was arrested and examined he said that it was decided by the executive committee that the dictator must die unless he changed his policy or gave up the post.

In 1880 " *Narodnaja Vola* " was divided into twelve groups, scattered in different parts of Russia, and numbering about five hundred men, who controlled thousands of the people. It must not be thought that these five hundred men knew all about the work of the executive committee. To carry out a death warrant the committee employed the so-called fighting groups, embracing not more than ten people each ; they were commanded by a chief, who at the decisive moment would be invested, for the time being, with power of dictator. Such a group would receive from the committee only an order " what " to do, but they would not be told " how " it should be done, and although the committee would co-operate in the execution they would leave to the group freedom of action. The members of such a group were appointed by the committee after a very severe test, and only those were admitted who swore that they would sacrifice their lives for the cause.

The fighting groups, therefore, were composed of people doomed to death. Should a member

decline to act he was sure to be murdered by his comrades ; were he too bold, the dynamite with which he proposed to kill often killed him as well ; while even the greatest courage and a certain amount of good luck did not suffice to protect him from capture by the police and from torture, katorga, or the rope.

Very few of those who belonged to the fighting group succeeded in escaping. Among those was Hartman, who caused the explosion of the mine on the railway near Moscow in 1879. He escaped to Paris, where he was discovered by the Russian police and his arrest was demanded. Hartman was apprehended in 1880. The Czar's ambassador made a most strenuous effort to obtain his extradition ; but the sympathy of the French, who did not wish that the hospitality of France should be violated by their Government, even in favour of an ally who borrowed from them such an enormous amount of money, prevailed. Hartman, who trusted the French constitution, was set at liberty.

The reactionary paper, *Moskievskia Viedomosti*, edited then by Katcoff, was full of bitter reproaches against the French, who protected a vile criminal ; the Russian diplomatists were black with anger ; the French politicians were perplexed ; but with the French people remained the victory.

CHAPTER XIII

Alexander's eroticism—Characteristics of his wife Maria Alexandrovna—The bad health and premature death of the Czarevitch Nicholas—Alexander's love for the Princess Dolgorukoff—Maria Alexandrovna's political party—The Princess Dolgorukoff's presence in the Winter Palace causes the Czarina's death—Alexander II.'s morganatic marriage with the Princess Dolgorukoff—Her influence on the Czar—Loris Melikoff's lack of sincerity and honesty in his liberal policy—His hypocrisy in abolishing "the third department"—The amusing side of Loris Melikoff's proposed Russian constitution.

ALEXANDER II. married the Duchess of Hesse-Darmstadt, who took the name of Maria Alexandrovna when she embraced the orthodox faith. From that union there were six sons: Nicholas, Alexander, Vladimir, Alexis, Serge, and Paul. Nicholas, by right of birth, was the successor to the throne. The wedded life of the Imperial couple was not very exemplary, because of Alexander's eroticism. The Czar was very elegant in his manners; he was even very affable and fond of dazzling other people by his philosophy and mysticism. As he was a very handsome man he was regarded by his Court as an Apollo, and consequently was not lacking in love conquests. Probably none of the former Czars had such a large illegitimate progeny as Alexander II., hidden under such names as Buturlin, Alexeiev, Yurjevski, etc. The Czarina suffered greatly from such conduct. She tried

to be kind and to forgive Alexander when he repented. His repentance, however, did not last long, for no sooner had he finished one love intrigue than he began another. The Czarina, who was very fond of her husband, lived in relative solitude.

Notwithstanding Alexander's conjugal unfaithfulness, the Czarina might have exercised an influence over her husband, who was of a feeble, vacillating character and easily led, but that she had no special gift of that kind; her virtues were merely the virtues of a bourgeoisie, who cared only for her home and for nothing else.

Maria Alexandrovna possessed all the weaknesses necessary to allow herself to become a tool in the hands of another Machiavelli. This almost happened. The Czarina was influenced very much by the Countess Bludov, a narrow-minded woman, devoted to the Orthodox Church. She hated everything that was not as stupid and shallow as herself. Bludov won Maria Alexandrovna for the Church, and forced her almost to fanaticism. The Czarina would repeat to her husband what was whispered to her by Bludov; the Czar often listened, for by his submission he perhaps wished to compensate his consort for his deceptions, or he may possibly have really thought in the same way, or not thought at all, for in general he had no inclination for thinking.

The Czarevitch Nicholas remained under his mother's influence. She was more fond of him than of her other children. He was very much liked, for, as Kolossoff said, "there is in Russia a tradition, which is without any logical founda-

tion, that the successor to the throne is more liberal, more humane, and more inclined to make concessions than the Czar." In this case that unfounded hope was ended by the death of Nicholas while yet a youth. His health had been bad from his birth, and a too effeminate education made his already weak constitution still more feeble.

Nearly dying at Nice, and manifesting a strong aversion towards marriage, Nicholas yet fell officially in love with Princess Dagmar, the daughter of the Danish King; but this union was prevented by the death of the Czarevitch in 1865. The Danish Princess put on mourning and became the *fiancée* of the successor to the throne, the Grand Duke Alexander.

The Czarina felt the loss of her eldest son deeply. He reminded her of a time when the sentiments of her now unfaithful husband were sincere. Maria Alexandrovna's sorrow furnished her with a still stronger reason for becoming more devotional. The priest Bazanov became her oracle, while his friends, the Countesses Bludov and Protasov, were the Czarina's satellites and confidantes.

Alexander's love for the Princess Dolgorukoff lasted, notwithstanding temptations. By her he had three children: George, born in 1872; Olga, born in 1873; and Catherine, born in 1878.

It is difficult to say whether the Princess had much influence in politics. It seems that she was deeply attached to her Imperial lover, and was neither exacting nor ambitious; and that for the price of Alexander's love she was ready to

make all concessions to those who aspired to Court influence. The Czarina was broken-hearted, for Alexander II. would spend the greater part of the day in the palace of the Princess Dolgorukoff.

Maria Alexandrovna's party was very powerful, especially when the successor to the throne, alarmed at the love his father had for his illegitimate children and their mother, joined the party.

Unexpectedly the attempt made by Chalturin influenced even Alexander's love intrigue considerably. This attempt showed clearly how strong the revolutionaries were, how watchful, and how they took advantage of every opportunity, and were ready to kill him at any moment. The secret police were obliged not only to watch over him day and night, but also to insist that the Czar should not go out so often to visit the Princess Dolgorukoff.

Alexander II. knew his danger. He trembled for his life, but on the other hand he loved the Princess Dolgorukoff too well, and could not refuse himself the pleasure of spending his leisure moments with her.

In March, 1880, the Princess Dolgorukoff went to the Winter Palace, where she lived with her children under the same roof with Alexander II. and Maria Alexandrovna. This caused the Czarina still greater sorrow. Her health had been shattered and she could not bear up against such a disgraceful and painful disregard for her feelings. She died in June, 1880.

The death of the Czarina was freedom for Alexander II. It was an event that he had

desired for some time, and he made no attempt to preserve appearances. This time he preferred to follow the example of a *muzik*, to whom the corpse of his wife supplied a pretext for the funeral festivities.

In the September of the same year that Maria Alexandrovna died, the Princess Dolgorukoff became the Czar's morganatic wife, under her new title of the Princess Yurjevski, and the children were legitimatised. The violation by the Czar of the conventionalities of mourning caused great indignation in Russia, and threw a shadow over his autocratic majesty. In the meanwhile, the Court was alarmed at the increased influence of the Princess Yurjevski. It became a question about her power and the crown.

The Czarevitch, with his wife Dagmar, who, on changing her religion had taken the name of Maria Theodorovna, used all possible means to obtain from Alexander II. a document by which the children by his morganatic wife would be excluded from all political influence. The Czar, for the sake of peace, granted their desire ; but, notwithstanding, the sweet and submissive Princess Dolgorukoff imagined herself to be a Czarina, and, even according to her foes, she was sufficiently intelligent and energetic for the position, although a little too much of a freethinker for some people.

How much truth there is in this estimate of her character it is difficult to say ; but it is impossible to deny that during this period of Alexander II.'s reign there were more bright moments and more earnestness than in his earlier policy. The

later policy had nothing in common with the former vacillating, terrorised and terrorising associations of the autocrat of all the Russias.

* * * * *

The great guardian of the Empire, the chief of the notorious "third division of the Imperial Chancery," Loris Melikoff, after Młodecki's bullet missed him, became a Liberal. Until now a merciless reactionary, he began to forgive and to allow hundreds of those who had been deported to return from Siberia.

Alexander II. meekly did everything he was told to do by Loris Melikoff, although he could not understand the meaning of his policy, which was to separate the group of revolutionary terrorists and to persuade the Russian nation that the Government did not fight the idea, but crime.

This policy would not have been bad, if it had been sincere and honest, if it had not been actuated by the hypocritical fear of seeming to approve of crimes; for it was a fact that of eight thousand political exiles, at least seven thousand were sent to Siberia without being tried and without proof of guilt. These people felt their wrong deeply, and they did not wish for favours, but demanded justice. When they came back they were again persuaded that the statutes of the Russian law were not respected by the Chief of the Imperial Police, but that every citizen depended on this autocrat's good or bad will towards him, and that no man in Russia was protected against the despotism of any governor. Hence the effect of Loris Melikoff's outburst of grace was very feeble.

Loris Melikoff, however, had more in store. He suggested to Alexander II. the abolition "of the third division of the Imperial Chancery." The Czar was frightened at his favourite's Liberalism, and inclined to discredit him. Loris Melikoff withstood the storm bravely, and then quietly said that the "protection" should remain under another name, but the whole question was to get rid of the hated name. The Czar was reassured, and signed a ukase abolishing the "third division."

That trick gave much pleasure to people of superficial judgment; those in whom the former "third division" was interested felt the presence of the police just the same.

But Loris Melikoff, once on the road of concession, determined to go still further. He had in reserve that for which the Russians had been longing for centuries. Loris Melikoff conceived the idea of drafting a Constitution.

The question of Constitution is very amusing in Russia. Still more amusing is the solicitude of the Czars, who are afraid that a Constitution would not do any good to their people. Consequently, Peter I., moved by this solicitude, instituted absolutism, and by killing thousands and thousands of persons he abolished the former self-government of Russia. After Peter, every Czar had Liberal government ready for his beloved people, only they could not get it, for while in one hand the liberal Czar held liberal constitutions, in the other he had a knout.

Catherine II. went so far as to call representatives of the people together in order to get their

advice with regard to a new code. The Duma behaved well, for its members were afraid of katorga. The Samojeds, however, were bold enough to say: "We beg that in the new code there should be written that officials and governors should not steal, for we are very poor."

That motion encouraged the other deputies to make more strange proposals, and the result was that the Duma was dispersed, and the Samojeds were knouted.

Even Peter III. and Paul I. thought of Constitutions, and Alexander I. was very fond of discussing them.

Therefore, Loris Melikoff's Constitution was not the first, nor did it differ much from the previous ones, for its foundation was that the Czar should remain autocrat, but that he should occasionally, according to his fancy, consult his people how the herd should become fatter for the herdsmen.

In a word, according to the proposed Constitution, herdsmen would remain herdsmen, whip would remain whip, and as for the cows, they received for the privilege of giving milk and bringing forth calves, the right of bellowing in honour of the herdsmen and for the glory of the whip. Loris Melikoff's Constitution was also going to be mere phraseology; he wished to humbug simpletons and to postpone liberal reforms.

Notwithstanding that, even such a caricature of Constitutional government as this had some value, for it legalised the word. Formerly, if anyone had been heard to pronounce the word

“constitution” he would have been sent to Siberia.

The Czar hesitated, postponed, resisted. Loris Melikoff insisted, urged, and tried to prove by arguments from his drafted Constitution that the Czar’s power would not be rendered feebler by one whit. The Princess Yurjevski backed up the Constitution. Alexander II. gave in on December 12th, 1881, on the eve of his death.

CHAPTER XIV

"Narodnaja Vola" waiting for the results of Loris Melikoff's policy—The fighting phalanx and their plan to kill the Czar—Nihilists' shop in Malaja Sadovaja Street—Zelaboff's arrest—The Countess Perovskaya a Nihilist—Her great qualities of heart and mind—Her love for Zelaboff—She commands the fighting phalanx on the day of the attempt—She changes the plan—How it was executed—What Europe said when Alexander was killed—The results of his policy.

AFTER the attempt in the Winter Palace, the executive committee of "Narodnaja Vola" was silent, watching Loris Melikoff's new policy, anxious to find out whether it was sincere and honest. The members of "Narodnaja Vola" considered terrorism a necessity, but never an aim; they promised solemnly to obey the representatives of the people, and they were ready even to take an oath of fidelity to Alexander II, if he would assume a position similar to that of the Emperors of Austria and of Germany.

Months passed by, and the half measures irritated and excited them to fight instead of pacifying them. Every day even the most enthusiastic optimists had to agree that Loris Melikoff was not consistent in his efforts to conciliate absolutism with self-government, and that in reality he was trying to produce a still worse system than the one that existed.

"Narodnaja Vola" was still silent, and did not plan any attempts or commit any murders.

The conspirators were scattered amongst the people, and limited themselves to teaching, to enlightening, to fighting ignorance.

All revolutionary writers of that time agreed that there was a lull, an expectation in their camp. Even the most reactionary amongst them could not help hoping that everything would be arranged peacefully.

In the meanwhile Alexander II. postponed his consent to Loris Melikoff's plan, and in that way the question of the Constitution remained a State secret to the last moment ; nobody knew anything positive about it. There were only rumours. The Russian nation expected from the throne, on the occasion of the new year of 1881, some promises of a Liberal Constitution. All hopes were deceived.

The executive committee determined to act, and sent Alexander his death sentence ; then got ready to execute it. The fighting phalanx was selected by the committee, and received precise orders. That group consisted of the most intelligent and the bravest members of the "Narodnaja Vola." At the head of them was Zelaboff, known already through the attempt of Chalturin. Then followed Sophia Perovskaya, Michael Rysakoff, Kibalchich, Kobozeff, Sablin, Michailoff, Hesia Helfman, Igacy Hryniewicz, and several other less prominent revolutionaries.

Zelaboff and his followers planned an attempt by means of dynamite. Experience had taught them that they could reach Alexander II. only by an explosive.

It was impossible to think of blowing up the Imperial Palace, for after the last attempt it was changed into a fortress, guarded day and night. It was useless to attempt to make a mine under a railway track, for thousands of people were forced to watch the line, and besides the authorities had introduced the method of sending three trains, each following the other at short intervals. Sometimes the Czar was in the first, sometimes in the third; sometimes he would change on the road and get into the second. Therefore an attempt of that kind was guess-work and dangerous for the revolutionaries: in case of a failure the superstition about the Czar's invulnerability would be increased.

They thought and pondered for a long time, and came to the conclusion that the best way would be to make a mine under one of the streets in St. Petersburg most frequented by the Czar's equipage. Such a street was Nevski Prospect; but the Prospect was too broad, and the rent of the houses too expensive, for, naturally, the mine must be worked from a house occupied by the conspirator, who could then act without any hindrance. Considering further, the revolutionaries concluded that Malaja Sadovaja Street was the best for their purpose, for the Czar often passed there when going to military reviews or to the artillery barracks.

They decided. Kobozeff took upon himself the most difficult part of the enterprise, for he was not yet known to the police, and had not been implicated in any trial, while the other members of the fighting phalanx were on the

black list. Some of them, as Perovskaya and Helfman, were fugitives.

Kobozeff began to work. Soon, in Malaja Sadovaja Street, there was started a provision shop. Its owner, Kobozeff, was a very cheerful and pleasant shopkeeper, and had the knack of gaining customers, who grew more numerous every day. Kobozeff worked hard, only he complained of his clerk and handy man . . . it was so difficult to get good help nowadays ! But it was useless to dismiss him, for it was not certain that another would be better. Kobozeff complained, shouted at his men, joked with customers, teased his purveyors and lived from day to day as he could.

But as the Czar often passed through Malaja Sadovaja Street it was under constant police supervision. Every housekeeper in that street was a professional spy, every tenant or lodger was carefully watched. Therefore, although the gay shopkeeper had all the appearance of a loyal subject, and although in his shop there was a holy image of St. Nicholas, as well as a portrait of the Czar, the "protection" came to make the acquaintance of the new shopkeeper.

The result of the visit of the "protection" was a report in favour of Kobozeff. Kobozeff had his papers in order, and the whole interior of the shop indicated that he was a man absorbed only by the paltry cares of a new tradesman. The "protection" was at its ease in regard to Kobozeff, but that did not mean that he was excluded from its vigilance. There could be no question about such a confidence.

Kobozeff's shop was subject to periodical

visitations and continued watching. The police had been taught by past experience in the Winter Palace that explosions were possible by other means than mines on the railway lines, and this made them careful. Kobozeff was pleased with the privileges enjoyed by Malaja Sadovaja, only he pleaded that they would not upset his goods too much during their inspections.

After some very careful investigations the "protection" was satisfied with only a partial inspection of the shop.

While Kobozeff settled in Malaja Sadovaja, the chemist Kibalchich got a new laboratory of explosive materials. This laboratory was in the house occupied by the *Workmen's Gazette*, under the supervision of Hesia Helfman. Kibalchich, helped by Sablin, began to work. It was a difficult task, because, being afraid of the police, they could not use a too complicated apparatus, and, moreover, the trials with the explosives had to be performed secretly; even nihilists outside the fighting phalanx did not know anything about them.

Kibalchich was a talented chemist and a remarkable mathematician. His main effort was, of course, not to make a dynamite mine—this was a plaything for him—but to manufacture a new killing weapon in the shape of a hand bomb.

The Imperial "protection" worked also. The death sentence received through the Czar's Chancery left no doubt that something serious was going to happen. "Narodnaja Vola" frightened to death the watchmen of the police. The

consequence of this was that as many spies as possible were set against revolutionaries.

It seems strange that these desperate regicides, forced to live like hunted game, should throw down the gauntlet so openly, and thus make their task more difficult. The only reason for this was, that by warning those whose lives they were going to attempt, the revolutionaries gave proof of their force, and desired to exonerate their efforts for freedom from the opprobrium of murder.

Such an ambition was dangerous to the revolutionaries, for the Imperial "protection" did not think of applying Loris Melikoff's Constitution and granting fair play to everybody, but followed the road beaten by Mezencov, Drenteln, and Muravieff the hangman. The arrests began. The danger was so great that Kibalchich and Sablin were obliged to remove their laboratory in Tielezna Street, for they noticed that they were already watched. All this was happening in February of 1881, when "work" in the shop in Malaja Sadovaja was so advanced that the mine was almost ready.

Police visits to Malaja Sadovaja were now more frequent and more strict, and although Kobozeff inspired confidence, the police came just the same and made searches in the shop, but they never found anything suspicious. Kobozeff's shop was always in perfect order. The only thing which might have been considered objectionable to those of æsthetic tastes, was an enormous cheese barrel that stood near the entrance. That barrel was of great importance to Kobozeff, for it served him not only to contain cheese, but also

the earth extracted during the night from the passage for the mine the nihilists were making under the street.

They worked hard, indeed. Mrs. Kobozeff, who had returned from visiting her parents in some remote corner of Russia, helped her husband as best she could. The labour was heavy. During the day they attended to numerous customers. During the night they were digging under the street. The task was hard—very hard, for the digging had to be done in such a way that there should be no outside traces of it, and it had to be so secret that the police who might enter at any moment would not be able to see anything.

Kobozeff and his fighting phalanx, however, combined great skill and inventiveness with perseverance. The plan was simple. Next to the shop, on the right-hand side from the door, was a room in which the shopkeeper and his wife lived. In that room a sofa stood near the wall. That sofa served not only as a bed for Mrs. Kobozeff, but also as a screen covering the opening to the underground passage made by the conspirators, which went as far as the middle of Malaja Sadovaja Street. The passage contained about a hundred pounds of dynamite, a quantity sufficient to blow up the whole street. From the mine there were wires to the machine that stood in the shop under the shelves near the entrance; thus the man who was going to make the battery active could see what was going on in the street.

Such a mine was a trifle for a battalion of engineers, who could have made it in a few hours,

but the nihilists required months of work, and continual presence of mind. The entrance to the mine had to be made through the foundation wall, which they were obliged to break with small pieces of iron; then they had to hand the fragments of the wall to their comrades, in the shape of cheese or pots of cream, the next day. When digging they had to avoid breaking the gas and water pipes, and for this reason were obliged to dig deeper; they were forced to prop up the walls of the underground corridor, and to carry out loads of earth in the shape of provisions apparently sold to customers.

When the mine was nearly finished, and Kibalchich was ready any day to put in the conductors, some of his co-workers suggested that another method should be tried in order to avoid killing innocent people.

In accordance with that suggestion, about the middle of February, 1881, Alexander received from London a box of pills. It came to the Imperial Chancery, and was handed to the Czar by his personal valet. The Czar was rather surprised. He was on the point of breaking the thin string, when he hesitated, and after thinking for a moment decided to send the box to the Court physician, Dr. Botkin, who cut the string. A little detonation was heard. The pills were analysed and were found to be made of nitro-glycerine of sufficient strength to kill three men. The explosion was intended to be produced by breaking, and not by cutting, the string.

This unsuccessful attempt aroused the watchfulness of the "protection," and decided the

fighting phalanx to act without further delay. The death warrant must be executed immediately.

The mine in Malaja Sadovaja was not the only thing relied upon. Experience had taught the nihilists that something might happen to frustrate the explosion of the mine. The Czar, in continual fear, changed his orders so often, and so carefully avoided following the same routes, that even amongst his immediate retinue it was not known when he would leave the Palace or where he would go. The conspirators agreed that should they fail with the mine, they would act with bombs manufactured by Kibalchich, who had just invented a new variety of that deadly modern weapon that would astound the most clever chemist.

When everything was ready and the mobilised phalanx were watching for an opportunity to see the Imperial equipage, Andrew Zelaboff, the dictator, the brains, and one of the most remarkable members of the executive committee, and popularly called "Lord" on account of his qualities and distinction, was arrested and imprisoned.

Zelaboff's arrest was accidental, and the police did not know whom they had caught ; they gave another name to Zelaboff, and knew only that they held some nihilist. Zelaboff's arrest, although a great loss to the party, did not prevent the execution of the plot.

On March 13th Alexander II. left the Winter Palace and went to the Michaelovski riding school. The observant conspirators noticed the Czar's carriage and escort about 12 o'clock in

Malaja Sadovaja Street ; the whole train passed over the mine so rapidly that Kobozeff had no time to connect the wires.

But the Czar was going to return. The conspirators watched, and the leadership was taken up by Sophia Perovskaya ; the conspirators accepted her as their leader without the slightest hesitation, for no one, except Zelaboff, inspired greater confidence and respect than she did.

Perovskaya assigned every conspirator his post. Kobozeff was near the electric battery, ready to let off the dynamite. Kobozeff's wife stood in the front of the shop, watching Michaeloff, who was near the riding school, in order to see the signals which they had agreed should be given by Rysakoff and Hryniewiecki. All of them were armed with daggers, revolvers, and bombs invented by Kibalchich.

Perovskaya formed the following plan : When the Czar returned the plotters were to let him enter Malaja Sadovaja and then attack him with bombs ; if they failed Kobozeff was to discharge the mine, which, of course, would kill even the conspirators themselves, but they cared nothing for their own lives.

Long, tedious moments passed ; the young Rysakoff grew impatient, Kobozeff, Michaeloff and Hryniewiecki became nervous ; Perovskaya alone went about quietly near the riding school where the Imperial carriage waited, with policemen and Cossacks around it. No one paid any attention to Perovskaya, for she was quite apart from the carriage, therefore none could suspect any evil designs on her part. Besides, who,

looking at that lovely and beautiful young lady, would ever suspect her of being a nihilist?

Perovskaya! One can rightly affirm that no cause had ever a more pure or a nobler member than Perovskaya!

Hesia Helfman was also a woman devoted to the cause of "Narodnaja Vola"; she was equally determined and brave, but Helfman came from obscurity; she was a child of misery, a victim of fate. Over Helfman's head hung a curse such as often shadows people of low caste, and makes them suffer physical and spiritual hunger. Helfman was a being who, led out from darkness to the light, must have been conscious of the depths through which she had passed; she remembered and appreciated these things at their proper value as so many contrasts of life. In every fight between Ahriman and Ormuzd, there are plenty of such beings; they were yesterday, are to-day, and will be to-morrow. Few are of such a mould as Perovskaya, for there are few who will not fight to defend their own rights, their own homes, but there are very few who are willing to fight for the oppressed and suffering.

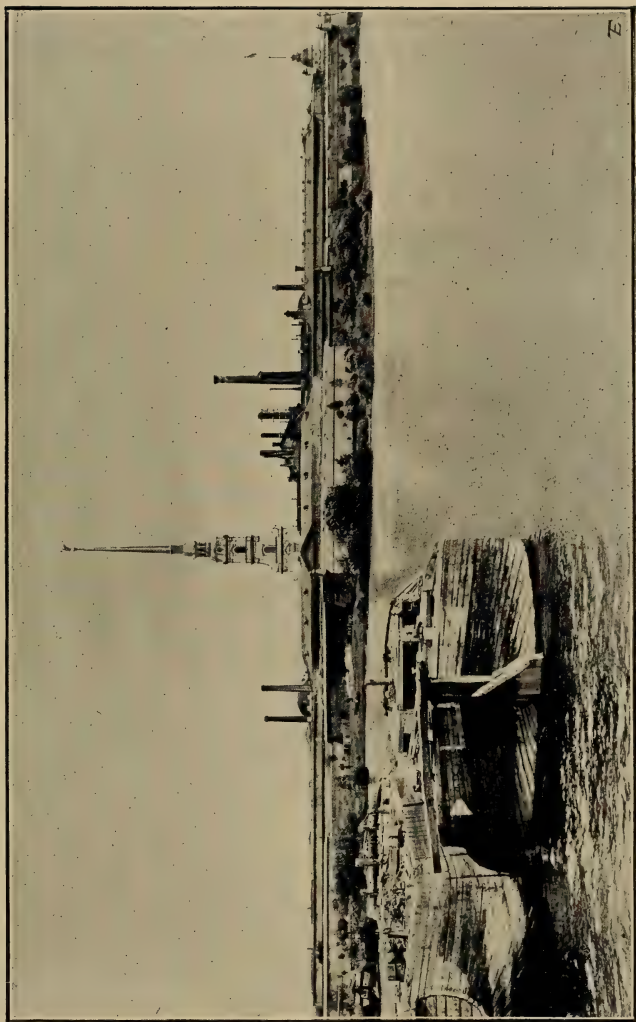
At this critical moment of action Perovskaya was only seven-and-twenty; she was beautiful and of good education; she was a lady by birth, she was rich and connected with the best families, for she was related to the Prince Razumowski, Elizabeth's morganatic husband; her grandfather was the powerful Alexiejevich, minister of culture, minister of the interior, chief of the Imperial Chancery! Her grandfather's brother, Count Wasyl, was a great general, who had

enriched the Czars by the conquest of vast provinces in Central Asia! And most wonderful of all, Perovskaya's father was governor of St. Petersburg!

The young and beautiful Countess, notwithstanding all these advantages, which placed her above the crowd, above misery, above humiliation, did not hesitate to stoop down and join the ranks of "*Narodnaja Vola.*" What induced her to do so? What made her descend in the nights and go to the underground of Russia? Enlightenment, only enlightenment. The Countess Sophia was always very fond of study, even as a child. She was in favour of emancipation when she was still a young girl. From the thought of the emancipation of women to the emancipation of the people was but a step. Social science impressed the Countess Sophia. Chernyshevski and Dobrolubov opened for her the book of misery of millions, and the beautiful Countess became their disciple.

One could write a book on how much strength Perovskaya required to overcome all her difficulties, including all the obstacles thrust in her way by her parents and family, to conquer diffidence, and everywhere to win love and respect for herself. One could write another volume about the wisdom and self-sacrifice of that idealistic and strange young lady.

Perovskaya was arrested in 1873 when she preached socialism to the crowd in St. Petersburg. When she was but nineteen years old she was shut up in Petropavlosk fortress. Imprisonment of several months, instead of breaking her, made the sweet Countess stronger. She was



PETROPAVLOSK FORTRESS.

released on bail, but she was carefully watched. In 1873 Perovskaya was followed and surrounded by police, but this did not make her give up her convictions or abandon her work. A year after she became a midwife in order to be more useful to the poor people. All her money she devoted to the poor, to buy books, medicine, and clothes for them.

At twenty years of age this young lady challenged the misery of the Russian Empire. In the trial of 1873 the nihilist Perovskaya was implicated. She did not think of excusing herself or of asking influential people to help her in her difficulties. The Countess spoke eloquently about the misery and the oppression of millions. She was found not guilty, but the "protection" determined to deport her. Perovskaya was warned. She disappeared, but yet managed so that she was everywhere where there was any question of fighting, of showing energy, or of self-sacrifice. From that time Perovskaya became a spirit that could not be seized by the police.

Perovskaya supervised propaganda, conceived the most daring plans for freeing political prisoners, thought of them continually, and was in communication with them; she directed Hartman's attempt near Moscow; she exhorted her comrades to persevere, and she stood before them as an example. During that time the Countess Sophia visited her mother, whom she loved most affectionately, and who was living in the Crimea; here the police set snares for her and she was caught. The joy of the police was of short duration, however, for the Countess, having told them that she

would escape, eluded them while she was being conducted to St. Petersburg, and reached the capital alone.

It is not difficult to see that such a woman was a great gain to the nihilists. She travelled from one end of the country to the other, and everywhere she appeared she aroused the greatest enthusiasm amongst young revolutionaries; she gave them energy and encouraged them to work harder and harder. About 1878 the Countess met Zelaboff, who by his broad and superior mind fascinated her. The Countess's pure heart throbbed with all the strength of its innocence for that superior revolutionary.

Was it love for Zelaboff that urged the Countess towards regicide? It is true that until then all her efforts had been directed to spreading enlightenment, to defending oppressed people, and to propagating socialism, but the atrocious barbarity of the government, which suppressed without mercy even the most humanitarian movements, had undoubtedly convinced Perovskaya that besides peaceful propaganda it was necessary to fight the official terror. Then Perovskaya gave two great proofs of her independence, which shattered any surmise that she would sacrifice her convictions for the sake of sentiment.

The relation of Perovskaya with Zelaboff was pure and expressed through the harmony of thoughts and deeds rather than through egotistical dreams of happiness. The association of these two was a secret, known only to very few of the fighting group. Sometimes the eyes of Zelaboff and Perovskaya met during discussions

about attempts, as their hands touched on the surface of the bombs, but that was all ; they knew and felt they were wedded to the same lot, to the same martyrdom.

When two days before the attempt Perovskaya learned of Zelaboff's arrest, not the slightest change in her face betrayed her emotion ; the members of " *Narodnaja Vola* " did not know feebleness.

Such a woman as this watched near the riding school for the Czar's return ; but the day of March 13th was a day of surprises. The Czar left the riding school and entered his carriage, which was immediately surrounded by policemen and Cossacks. It was a picturesque suite, but looked rather like the escort of a prisoner than the retinue of an autocratic monarch.

At the head was a Cossack mounted on a spirited, prancing, beautiful horse. He was followed by two more Cossacks ; then the Imperial carriage surrounded by Cossacks—again Cossacks, and after them a sledge with the colonel of police, Dvorzecki.

Perovskaya drew a handkerchief in order to give the signal agreed upon to Rysakoff and Hryniewiecki. Suddenly the suite turned round and went through Ekaterinski Canal, and thence into Inzynierskaya Street to the Michaelovski Palace. The Czar went to lunch with the Grand Duchess Catherine Michaelovna.

In that way the Czar not only prolonged his life, but he succeeded in thwarting the plans of the conspirators, for from the Michaelovski Palace to the Winter Palace the shortest way was by Ekaterinski Canal, along the railing

of the Michaelovski gardens. It was therefore very doubtful that the Czar would return through Malaja Sadovaja.

Perovskaya grasped the situation ; she realised that the attempt could not be postponed, for Zelaboff's arrest would furnish the "protection" with a clue to the plot. So she changed the programme. Rysakoff, Hryniewiecki and Michaelov were posted in Ekaterinski Canal. Mrs. Kobozeff watched the apparatus, while her husband was to signal the appearance of the Imperial retinue at the further end of Malaja Sadovaja.

Now the conspirators had less chance, for while formerly in the same space both bombs and mine could be utilised, now only one or the other could serve the purpose. Perovskaya took up her position at the corner of Inzynierskaya Street on the right, turning towards Ekaterinski Canal and the Theatre Bridge.

About two o'clock in the afternoon the Czar started from Michaelovski Palace. At the same moment Perovskaya waved her handkerchief. The conspirators understood. The supreme moment approached. The Czar was going through the Ekaterinski Canal—everything depended on Kibalchich's bombs ! The conspirators placed themselves at a distance from each other in order to act separately, and walked slowly along the street. First Rysakoff, then Hryniewiecki, and in reserve Michaelov. The Czar and his suite hastened from Inzynierskaya Street and turned. . . . Rysakoff waited quietly till the retinue came near to him, then advanced and threw his bomb.

A terrific noise shook the earth, clouds of

smoke enveloped the whole of the Imperial party. Rysakoff aimed well, which was not difficult, for the Ekaterinski Canal is very narrow, bordered on one side by the railing of the gardens, and on the other by a banister running along the canal.

It was not necessary to wait long to see the effect of the explosion, notwithstanding the smoke. Several dead men and horses were lying in the snow, weltering in blood. The horses harnessed to Dvorzecki's sledge stampeded, while those of the Cossacks who were not killed ran madly away. Awful moanings succeeded the explosion. Rysakoff stood, stunned by the explosion, looking on the half-shattered Imperial carriage.

Suddenly the door opened and Alexander II. alighted—unscathed! Rysakoff trembled. He had his dagger and a revolver, but it was already too late for him to use them, for the strong hands of two sailors, who were there, pinioned his arms.

Colonel Dvorzecki rushed to the Czar; a crowd of passers-by, attracted by the explosion, surrounded the spot; the policemen whistled fiercely for aid, and the dispersed Cossacks came back.

Alexander II. was blue with fright; he turned to Dvorzecki and asked if anyone was killed, and then, noticing the struggling Rysakoff, he asked him:

“Who are you?”

Rysakoff became confused, but answered in true Russian official fashion: “An inhabitant of Razan, your Imperial Majesty!”

“Lovely!” muttered the Czar through his teeth, and ordered the arrest of Rysakoff.

But here Hryniewiecki came on the scene, and noticing that the bomb had not harmed the one for whom it was specially intended, did not hesitate, but threw his bomb at a moment when nobody was on guard. Thus, within four minutes of the first explosion there was another. Hryniewiecki threw the bomb between himself and the Czar at a distance of only a few steps.

This time the effect was awful. The Czar fell as if cut by a scythe, his legs were shattered to pieces, his side was laid open; Dvorzecki sprawled on the ground covered with wounds, while several onlookers paid the penalty of their curiosity by death, or by wounds. The man who caused the explosion, Hryniewiecki, was lying lifeless in the midst of the carnage he had dealt.

The dying Czar was put in Dvorzecki's sledge and hurried to the Winter Palace. After a few hours' agony, without recovering his senses, Alexander II. expired. He died, leaving the Constitution signed; he went to his account, perhaps, with a complaint against human ingratitude and wickedness.

Alexander's death made Europe indignant; it aroused sympathy for one of the most powerful rulers, who had met with a terrible end; it made the people philosophise on the transience of majesty; it also afforded an opportunity for asking what had been the results of his long reign? These were indeed very paltry.

The Czar was called pompously, "The liberator of the peasants." In freeing people from serfdom he had not given them back even half of that which was taken from them by Peter I. He was

called the Czar-Reformer—who had been satisfied with the introduction into absolutism of some appearances of self-government during short intervals of good-heartedness; who granted half concessions, every one of which was followed by the wildest reaction?

It is true that Alexander II. had no capable men around him, that the people had been made vicious by Nicholas's cruel system, but why should he have martyred his subjects for their convictions, for their thoughts, for the appearances of guilt? Why had he murdered so many thousands for their religious beliefs, for aversion from the orthodox church?

Alexander II.'s death was dreadful, but even such as it was, was it too cruel an expiation for his inhumanity to the hundred thousand people whom he had caused to be buried alive without a trial and without any proof of their guilt? No.

But does this mean that the assassins are to be excused? Again, No.

CHAPTER XV

Alexander III.'s heartlessness towards the Princess Yurjevski—
His character—The precautions taken to protect the Czar
—Trial and sentence of the Fighting Phalanx—Impudence
of the Russian Senate—Russia's vain efforts to make a
convention with other European countries for extradition
of Nihilists.

ALEXANDER III. ascended the throne ; he was the second son of Alexander II. and the Duchess of Hesse-Darmstadt. There were various rumours about the new Czar. They were, in general, favourable. According to these, his reign was going to be more honest and the future brighter.

How Alexander III. could have acquired the reputation of being liberal will remain a secret. It can be attributed only to the too ardent imagination of his contemporaries, for it is certain that the new Czar did not hesitate one moment to announce his views, which were similar to those of Nicholas I.

Alexander's death had frightened his family, but aroused no regret in them. Perhaps the Princess Yurjevski alone deeply felt the loss of her lover and husband. Those, however, who dared to laugh at her when, in her moment of despair, she cut off her lovely hair and placed it on the coffin of the beloved man, were compelled to feel ashamed of themselves when the Princess, by her quiet and solitary life in Nice,

proved that she loved Alexander and not the Czar.

How the Czar's children felt their father's death is best proved by the fact that one hour after he had expired the Princess Yurjevski, his morganatic wife, was driven away from the Palace by the new Czar, and, in forty-eight hours, from the Russian Empire for ever. The same lot was meted out to her children. This deed, while Alexander's body was yet warm, without any respect for ordinary decency, was an almost infallible foreshadowing of the character of the future reign.

Having settled with the Princess Yurjevski, Alexander III. issued a ukase in which the autocracy was strongly emphasised. That ukase was met by a proclamation issued by "Narodnaja Vola," which referred to the Czar's manifesto concerning the murder of his father, and dilated upon constancy. The manifesto of "Narodnaja Vola" made Russia tremble, while the ukase of Alexander III. merely furnished an opportunity for sarcastic periphrase: "We, by the grace of Zelaboff and of Perovskaya, etc." The Russians did not appreciate the strength of the nihilists at its proper value, and received Alexander's manifesto with unjustifiable light-heartedness. They had forgotten that Alexander III. was a pupil of the wicked and shallow Pobiedonosceff, who now lifted his head defiantly. There was no question of any reactionary direction, of any tendency to this or that kind of politics. The Czar was the most pronounced reactionary, blinded by his divine mission, arrogant, and

admitting not the slightest remark against him in that respect.

The Russian ruler had some more ominous peculiarities. Alexander III. was superstitious, irritable, and never willing to acknowledge that he was mistaken. He was easily prejudiced against people and things. He was suspicious, fearing to find poison in every dish. He was afraid of his own shadow.

It is true that Alexander III. was brought up amid continual strife with murderers, with Czari-cides ; but nobody forced him to put on the thorny crown. He went towards the danger of himself, and he should have had the courage to meet it, or at least he should have pretended that he had that courage.

On the day of his accession to the throne Alexander III. received the proclamation of "Narodnaja Vola," in which he was requested to summon the Duma, to give Russia a Constitution, to grant freedom of conscience, English *habeas corpus*, and amnesty for political prisoners. In exchange for that the nihilists promised to give up conspiracy.

In answer to this ultimatum Alexander III. surrounded himself with such a wall of police, with such a crowd of spies, that, instead of a ruler, he became a prisoner, buried the whole prestige of monarchy, and aroused doubts of his power amongst the humblest of his subjects. He had confidence only in his police. Ministers, dignitaries of the crown all came from the ranks of the police. Only police possessed influence. Police ruled the Church, the army, and the Czar.

It is true that after the assassination of Alexander II., and later the murder of President Garfield, all rulers became more careful of their persons ; but the means employed by them could not be compared with the precautions adopted by Alexander III. The Imperial residences were under continual supervision by police, no matter whether the Czar was at the moment in St. Petersburg or in Livadia. Their supervision entailed the watching of the Imperial servants, the making of inspections everywhere, of everything, and of everybody. When it was announced that the Czar was coming a fresh crowd of police appeared on the scene and again searched and made inspections—they were the quintessence of police !

It would be too tedious to describe all the precautions that were taken when Alexander III. travelled in a railway train, when he passed a town, and when he was going to have something to eat. Verily, one was obliged to have strong nerves to live and to rule in such circumstances. Alexander III. had a strong constitution to begin with, but it did not last for long.

His accession to the throne was the signal for a most zealous inquiry after nihilists. Investigation was going on continually in the whole of Russia, but the police discovered as much as the nihilists were willing to allow and no more ; they arrested only those who were willing to undergo the martyrdom. The police searched St. Petersburg from top to bottom, but if it had not been for the evidence of the conspirators many details and names would have remained secret.

Were the Russian police as bad as that? No! It was the system of persecution that educated the determined and intelligent political offenders so well.

One must remember that Zelaboff was arrested on March 2nd by accident. On March 12th the police made a special investigation of Kobozeff's shop and found nothing. On March 13th the Czar was killed; on March 14th, after torturing Rysakoff, they visited the laboratory, where they arrested Hesia Helfman. The same day Zelaboff, learning that Rysakoff was caught, asked to be prosecuted with him, for, said he, he participated morally in the murder; on March 15th Michaelov was arrested while he was going to meet Sablin. The police had almost all the threads in their hands, but they did not know yet about Hryniewiecki, whom they called by some other name. They were looking after a Mrs. Trigoni, and had not heard about Kibalchich and Kobozeff, who disappeared with his wife.

The result of the police examination was not very important, therefore, especially when one remembers that Perovskaya moved about freely, visited her comrades, learned all about the prisoners, and helped them in the best way she could. The news from the Petropavlosk fortress was very gloomy—the doom of the regicide was settled. The comedy of a trial was postponed, for the authorities hoped that they would be able to increase the number of victims. When Zelaboff was asked why he wished to be mixed up in the affair, he said that without him the trial would have no importance.

This news made a deep impression on Perovskaya. The Countess would not listen when advised to go abroad ; she would not hide, she meant to see Zelaboff—and was arrested. She avowed her guilt, and defended the others, who were mere tools in her hands.

Kibalchich was yet free, pursuing his mathematical studies. He was just trying to solve the problem of how to direct balloons, when the police entered his study. Kibalchich smiled, put his papers carefully aside, and went to the fortress.

The prosecution was now conducted with redoubled energy, for the officials thought they would be able to catch the whole of nihilism within their net ; but the most important result of their efforts was the discovery of eight thousand pounds of dynamite. Such an enormous mass of destructive matter showed how powerful were the means of terrorism. The nihilists were here, there, and everywhere, and nowhere. The prisoners were silent, and if they spoke it was to accuse the government and to show up the cruelty of absolutism.

Those who investigated the affair were doing their utmost to make the nihilists divulge, but they met with such a stubborn silence that the commander of the Petropavlosk fortress, General Majdel, died of irritation, as the official report stated, caused by nihilists.

Majdel's death produced a command from the Czar : " Finish ! "

The Czaricides were going to be hanged, but the authorities wished to make their execution a warning to others ; hence a mock public trial

was gone through. Several hundred tickets were distributed amongst reactionaries and police. The trial lasted three days, and for three days the judges were so ashamed of themselves that they hardly dared to look at the prisoners; at the accused turned accusers.

Zelaboff, student in law, defended himself and the others. He talked about the programme of the "Narodnaja Vola," about the Duma, about freedom of conscience and personal inviolability, about prosperous and free Europe, and about wretchedly poor and oppressed Russia. The audience listened in indignation, for it was composed of police for whom Zelaboff's ideas were doom. And when the dictator said proudly: "I am as good a Russian as you are!" the audience murmured angrily. Zelaboff became pale, sighed, and was silent, while Perovskaya whispered to him that it was a pity to throw pearls before swine.

The sentence of death was pronounced upon all of them.

Perovskaya, Zelaboff, and Kibalchich accepted it without betraying the slightest emotion. Helfman stated that she was pregnant. Rysakoff and Michaelov appealed to the Czar's mercy.

The Senate was going to decide about that "mercy," although it was the senators' duty to state that one hundred and twenty years before capital punishment had been abolished in Russia. But the senators dared not do so, and they went so far with their ignominious servility that in giving reasons for their decision they said: "The iniquity of the prisoners cannot be palliated, for

it reached the Czar, who had sacrificed his whole life to ensure the country's prosperity and the happiness of the people. The prisoners had committed the greatest crime that ever was committed in this world."

It is impossible to imagine to oneself a court composed of men abject enough to insult humanity in such a way ! Alexander's death " the greatest crime " !

Alexander III. and his Senate could not suppose that such words would serve to change the most loyal Russians into the most enraged nihilists. Could they really think that there were no more intelligent people in Russia capable of reasoning ?

Yes ; Alexander II.'s death was a crime, a political one, but a crime just the same ; but if one accepts the justice of death for death then one must ask how many years too long had Alexander II. ruled ? How many years too late were the bombs thrown by Rysakoff and Hryniewiecki ?

These are dreadful questions, but still more dreadful was the corruption of Alexander III.'s passive tools, the senators and judges.

The sentence was executed on April 15th, 1881. All were hanged, except Helfman, and the European papers reporting the official news finished in an elegant way : " In seventeen minutes everything was over. Beautiful weather—it was the first day of spring."

Such was the end of the fighting phalanx. But the new government was not satisfied with such a harvest, reasoning, not without logic, that

"Narodnaja Vola" would go further ; and when it saw that revolutionaries acted openly in Geneva, Paris, and London, it opened a diplomatic campaign against them. The principal man against whom all the Russian ambassadors worked was Hartman, who had made an attempt on the Czar near Moscow in 1880. They had chosen Hartman because the Russian police could not help knowing about him, and because he was the most striking example of the political criminal who should be handed over to the Russian authorities.

Diplomatic notes, secret correspondence, and conferences were spread over a year ; but, excepting always officious Germany and submissive Austria, no country would agree to extradite nihilists. For more than a year the bureaucracy suborned articles in the press against a monstrous nihilism that was threatening the whole world ; during upwards of a year the Russian government tried to persuade other governments that they should all take common action, but honest Western European nations refused to do so. Honest Western nations knew well that the terror of nihilism is dangerous only to Russian absolutism, and that so-called nihilists have nothing in common with anarchy.

In that conviction of Western European countries it is difficult to say how much there is of human sentiment, of free enthusiasm, or of malicious testimony. It is sufficient that Russia remained alone. Hartman, Viera Zasulich, and hundreds of nihilists lived quietly, on the whole, only needing to be careful to avoid capture by a stratagem of the Russian police.

CHAPTER XVI

Alexander's hard reign—The Czar distrustful of everybody—His discovery of an item in the Court account of 400,000 pounds of tallow candles—Amusing explanation of it—The Czar ruled by Pobiedonosceff—Bribery practised by the Imperial family—The Czar's domestic virtues and the licentious life of the Grand Dukes—The Prince Woroncov-Daskov's agreement with nihilists—How the Czar expressed his disapproval of nihilism—Russia's stupid policy towards socialists—Exploits of Sudejkin and his violent death—Why Degajeff murdered him.

WHAT became of the constitution signed by Alexander II. ?

The constitution was dismissed in May, together with Loris Melikoff. Alexander III. did not think of freedom ; nor would he permit it to be mentioned. Again the same hard, merciless reign against progress, civilisation, enlightenment. Religious persecutions, chasing after the nightmare of nihilism, supervision of students by police, abolition of the slightest alleviation granted to agriculture, the censorship of the press, prohibition, continual prohibition, and still more prohibition, all that was again introduced as during the reign of Paul I., Peter, or Biren.

Who was the ruler ?

The Czar alone, as it seemed, only the Czar. At least, Alexander III. firmly believed it was he. His subjects, however, were of different opinions. Alexander III. would read the State papers the

whole day, for he trusted nobody : everyone was a thief or a conspirator, according to his opinion. Perhaps he was right ! Alexander III. seemed to remember well that Alexander II. said : " In Russia everybody can be bribed except me ; and it is except me because I am not in need ! "

The new Czar had an example of this in his own family, in the person of his uncle, Nicholas Nicolajevich. Alexander hated dishonesty, and was very avaricious. His avarice, although not agreeable to the courtiers, was a virtue in him, for a spendthrift monarch in a country where the civil list means putting his hands into the public treasury at his own sweet will is a calamity.

Alexander III. cut off the Court expenses the civil lists of the Grand Dukes, whom he dismissed from the government, and looked through the accounts. Sometimes he discovered extraordinary tricks of clever administration. The following is a most amusing example. The Czar was not a very clever accountant, but his attention was drawn to an extraordinary entry of 400,000 pounds of tallow candles used at the Court towards the end of the eighteenth century. The Czar ordered an investigation in the archives of the Court. These investigations lasted for several weeks, till the explanation of 400,000 pounds of tallow candles was found.

In 1791 his Imperial Highness the Grand Duke Alexander Pavlovich, having taken part in a military review, on the occasion of the birthday of her Majesty Catherine II., had suffered some-



ALEXANDER III.

what from his exertions. The great marshal of the Court, at the request of a Court physician, furnished a tallow candle, of which a plaster was made and applied to the highly-born but suffering Grand Duke's person. From that time forward the great marshal deemed it proper and necessary for the benefit of the Grand Dukes' health to have in reserve a certain quantity of tallow candles; hence, after ninety years, the quantity of tallow candles, as a medicine for the highly-born members of the Imperial family, reached 400,000 pounds.

This kind of discovery increased Alexander III.'s liking for reading accounts, and produced the mental feebleness which was sometimes manifested in humorous remarks that obedient officials regarded as inspired. Thus, for instance, in one telegram the Russian would read that such and such a report was written by "His Majesty's own hand": "we shall see," or "it can be."

But Alexander III.'s independence was only apparent, and was limited to annotations, remarks, and signatures; and although he refused to recognise any suggestions made by favourites, he became a prey to a party and its tool. The head of that party was Pobiedonosceff, whose official position was that of Oberprocurator of the Synod, a position equivalent to that of the Pope. Pobiedonosceff, Alexander's former instructor, knew his pupil, and worked upon him through mysticism and superstition. He would begin with God and finish with God, but in the middle would get from him some not very Christian order.

The question who was Pobiedonosceff is answered in the following popular Russian lines :—

“Pobiedonoscew dla Synoda
Donoscew dla caria
Biedonoscew dla naroda
Zlatonoscew dla siebia !”

(*Noscew* comes from *nosit*, to bring ; *donos* means delation ; *bieda*, misery, trouble ; *zlato*, gold.) The Oberprocurator of the Synod had very few friends, but they were faithful to him and obeyed him. Among Pobiedonosceff's friends were Cherevin, the chief of the Czar's “protection” ; Sabler, his right hand in the Synod ; Janysheff, the Czar's confessor ; Katkoff, [editor of *Moskievskija Wiedomosti* ; Father John of Cronstadt ; and a few generals. This party, although apparently feeble, was so intelligent and so clever at intriguing that the Czarina was obliged to join it.

Alexander III. was a faithful husband. Perhaps for a monarch he stayed too much at home. The Czarina could not complain that he was ever unfaithful to her—she was the mother of five children—and Alexander respected her. But this was not sufficient for her : she was ambitious and wanted to rule. The Czar on this point was stern, and angrily forbade her to interfere with State affairs. The Czarina joined the Pobiedonosceff party, and after that she exerted an influence of which everyone was aware except the Czar himself. The Czarina's example was followed by all those who wished to carry any weight at the Court, or in the Russian Empire. Even

the Grand Dukes bent their heads before Pobiedonosceff.

Alexander's thrift had a disastrous effect, for it was the cause of the spreading of bribery even amongst the Imperial family. In the palaces of the Grand Dukes, whose civil lists were curtailed, but who did not care to limit their expenses, gambling was indulged in continually. Everyone who wished to get any favour was obliged to gamble and to lose. Merchants, manufacturers, contractors, before they asked for concessions, for grants, for contracts, were obliged to put their money on the green table. It was universally known in St. Petersburg that one was obliged to lose so much, otherwise it was impossible to do anything.

Of course the Czar knew nothing about the new method of bribery. He did not know either about the profligate lives or about the orgies and the scandals of the Grand Dukes, who made such establishments as those of Miedwied and Cubat famous.

Alexander III. was a good husband, a good father, and a moral man in private life; but the Grand Dukes did everything to continue the traditions left by Alexander II., Peter I., and Catherine. The wife of the Grand Duke Vladimir, Maria Pavlovna (of Meklemburg), was Catherine's competitor in licentiousness and lust. As for Pobiedonosceff, he smiled cunningly, threatened the Grand Dukes with his finger, and when any of them wished to show him that he was a Grand Duke, Pobiedonosceff reported him to the Czar, who usually punished the culprit

so severely that Pobiedonosceff was feared more than ever.

In the meanwhile the struggle with the nihilists continued, for they did not sheath their sword. The police continually discovered new plots against the Czar, even when there were none. This was done because the mighty ruler of Russia could not sleep without a report that some attempt on his life was thwarted. The secret police, having noticed that if they did not bring at least a false report about some plot they were suspected of lack of zeal and activity, began to make plots in order to frustrate them and report them to the Czar.

The following actual fact shows how much the Czar's immediate attendants were afraid of nihilists. Alexander's coronation worried everyone at the Court, for either it was necessary to surround the Czar with a forest of bayonets, and by so doing deprive the ceremony of its charm and magnificence, or to trust that only an accident could save the Czar from the bomb.

Prince Woroncov-Dashkov, the minister of the Court, had an idea of making peace with the nihilists. Helped by Schcherbatoff and Shuvaloff, he drafted an agreement, according to which they were willing to purchase the security of the Czar during the coronation by giving Dobroluboff his liberty, promising that a constitution would be granted, and paying to the nihilists one million francs. Dr. Nowinski, a Pole, was chosen as mediator, and was sent to Paris to Lavroff, who agreed to the proposed condition, but asked Nowinski for a personal

guarantee that the agreement would be kept by the Russian government. Nowinski returned to St. Petersburg to get the money. In the meanwhile something unexpected happened. Woroncov-Dashkov confided his plans to some dignitary from whom Pobiedonosceff, and through him the Czar, learned about the agreement. Alexander III. summoned Woroncov-Dashkov and struck him such a hard blow in the face that the Prince bled. Woroncov was no longer in favour, and the coronation assumed the character of a military review.

After Alexander II.'s death plot followed plot. Almost every week the "protection" found bombs, infernal machines, mines, daggers, revolvers, and proclamations. The tracked nihilists were no longer afraid of the persecution of the police, but objected to having false papers and bombs put into their houses and lodgings "by order."

There were plenty of rumours about attempts, but it was difficult to distinguish the true from the false. Nihilists are silent in that regard, for these are recent facts, and there is no prescription for Russian absolutism.

But the members of "Narodnaja Vola" gave signs that they were still alive. At the beginning of March, 1882, the public prosecutor in Kieff, Strelnikoff, who terrorised socialists and revolutionaries mercilessly, received his death warrant from the executive committee of "Narodnaja Vola," and on the 30th of the same month he was shot while walking on the Odessa Boulevard.

That new manifestation of terror was answered next day by the shooting of the famous revolutionary, Lieutenant Suchanoff, in Cronstadt ; and four days later by the hanging in Odessa of Zelaboff and Chalturin, the men who blew up the Winter Palace.

Investigations following the murder of Strel-nikoff were the cause of the arrest of the two Bogdanovichs. Sudejkin, the chief of the police in St. Petersburg, ordered that the Bogdanovichs should be confronted with all the housekeepers in the capital. The result was very unexpected, for the housekeeper of one of the houses from Malaja Sadovaja recognised in one of the Bogdanovichs the former owner of the provision shop, Kobozeff.

Sudejkin at once became a celebrity, and his career was made. The young colonel of police could dream now of the highest honours. He developed such energy that in addition to ten trials, for which he was answerable, he sent to katorga about six hundred people in the ordinary way of administration, and kept as many more in the prisons. The revolutionaries, although they had nothing to do with "Narodnaja Vola," which was the main object of police persecution, suffered greatly at Sudejkin's hands, for on the slightest suspicion he would proceed to get rid of any supposed nihilist.

If the party of terror still obtained fresh recruits it was the fault of the Russian government. One should remember that during the first decades of the last century the socialistic movement was very strong in Europe. Different

remedies were tried against socialism until it was discovered that the best way was to limit its action to the economical fight between workmen and capitalists. Socialism, although thus dwarfed, continued to advance, for its representatives carried the banner of labour oppressed by wealth. Little by little strikes developed from revolutionary acts, threatening the State into an economical protection of the interests of the working classes, and the socialists became political parties with their representatives in Parliament, and claiming rights of legitimate contention with capitalists. The European governments made an effort to stand outside the fighting ground, and to make believe that they did not support any of the contending parties; on principle they were in favour of, although without sympathy with, the workmen, on condition that they remained orderly and refrained from disturbances and riots. In a word, the whole of Western Europe tried hard to find a *modus vivendi* with the socialists.

The narrow-minded Russian government, instead of imitating the rest of Europe, began to persecute all agitations of workmen, and punished their complaints with *katorga*, death, and prison, and in that way made millions more dissatisfied than ever. Consequently, the Russian revolutionists, notwithstanding that they were decimated by persecution, obtained new adherents, who were prompted to join them by the oppressive system adopted by the government.

George Sudejkin, the chief of the secret police, was a perfidious creature who employed against

the nihilists Satanic methods of which nobody had thought before. He published a revolutionary paper, wrote and printed proclamations; moreover, he made some of his agents nihilists.

Sudejkin's plan was Machiavellian: to introduce spies into secret societies, to make them quarrel between themselves, to weaken them, and then to crush them by one blow. That method was a very dangerous one for the "Narodnaja Vola." The nihilists, before they could communicate with each other, were spied upon and betrayed. Mutual distrust paralysed their activity. The police now acted less often, but when they did it was with certainty. Spies were everywhere: at meetings, in the committees, and in secret printing establishments; they played the parts of martyrs in prisons and were accusers in trials.

The nihilists lost their balance; mutual accusations and suspicions consumed their forces and made them feeble. Sudejkin did not scruple even to refuse support to his agents, and when, in one trial in 1882, one of his spies, Merkuloff, was accused, the chief of the secret police made no effort to release him, for he did not wish to show his hand to the nihilists, and Merkuloff was sent to katorga with others.

This energy on the part of the chief of the secret service delighted the government and the Court. At last the genial police had found a remedy by which the monarchy could be cured of blood-poisoning. Sudejkin became an influential and powerful man, and expected before long to become at least minister of the interior.

One can easily imagine the panic that was caused when on December 28th-29th, 1882, the news was reported that this powerful chief of police had been murdered, together with his nephew, Sadowski. The cold corpses of the two murdered men were found in a house in a small street near Nevski Prospect.

This daring murder made a great impression in the capital and throughout the whole of the empire. The police began to investigate, to guess. All the nihilists made by Sudejkin were arrested. A certain Jablonski—who served both parties, the police and the revolutionaries—was suspected, but the police were obliged to face the fact that one of their captains—Sudejkin's right hand, Degajeff—had disappeared on the day of the murder.

But what could Degajeff have had to do with that affair? Had they not found on the murdered men a death warrant signed by the executive committee? The doubts were of short duration. The man who had executed the death warrant was Degajeff. A cold shiver ran through all the Russian police. Suspicion was changed into certainty!

Degajeff had served as a policeman for years, but he had served, before all, the revolutionaries. Degajeff had worked for years and years to win confidence. Degajeff would discover infernal machines and stores of dynamite. Degajeff would make raids and catch nihilists; but, as it seemed, only those who were suspected of treason by the committee. Degajeff had been a close observer of Sudejkin's work. He was his

secretary, his help, but Degajeff's watchfulness could not match Sudejkin's cunning, and Degajeff was afraid, on his own account, of that cunning. This danger increased, for the nihilists reproached him with being unfaithful to them. Then Sudejkin had noticed that someone interfered with his plans. The chief of the secret police complained of this to the captain, who set a trap for Sudejkin. He induced his superior and his nephew to go with him to capture some nihilists, and then he got rid of them.

The police had no doubt that Degajeff had accomplices, being sure that he could not have managed to overcome two strong men always prepared for any emergency. How were they to find accomplices without Degajeff, who was lost like a stone in the sea? The most careful search after him was of no avail, either in his native land or abroad. But some two years afterwards it was discovered that the captain had lived in St. Petersburg for some time after the murder, working in a coal-yard, and that when the zeal of the police had abated he went abroad, where he now lives quietly.

CHAPTER XVII

The Czar spends millions of roubles for his protection—The attempt at Borki—Who was the mysterious cook who wrecked the train with an infernal machine?—How the Czar's presumed miraculous escape was effected—Fate of an officer—The Czar an athlete—A faithful servant killed by a kick from the Czar—Religious persecution in Russia—Selivestroff's death furnishes a new opportunity to the Russian government of renewing its efforts to induce European governments to make political offences extraditable—Why the Czar sent his son to Siberia—An attempt on the Czarevitch's life—The Czar's death a result of the attempt at Borki—The results of Alexander III.'s thirteen years' reign.

SUDEJKIN's murder was only an interlude in the history of darkest Russia. The revolutionary movement was not on the decrease; on the contrary, it was growing stronger and stronger. Alexander III. did everything he could to kill the Hydra, but did not succeed. Various means were resorted to for influencing the people and securing the defeat of the revolutionary propaganda.

The Czar spent millions of roubles in printing pamphlets that were distributed gratuitously; he ordered three-fourths of the population of his empire to wear uniform in order to obtain better control, under the supposition that men in uniform feel more important. He abolished the public execution of political offenders, together with public trials. In that way he deprived the revolutionaries of the opportunity of making theatrical displays of their bravery

and arousing sympathy by sacrificing themselves as martyrs for freedom.

Arrests were made quietly, and prisoners were either executed or sent to Siberia without any public demonstration. The fight was dreadful, but the persecutors did not benefit from their new tactics, and when it was seen that the attempts increased, Pobiedonosceff found out that the cause of the terror was the lack of religion. This discovery produced a famous ukase; but no one dared to publish it, not even Katkoff. The editor of *Sibir* in Irkutsk, however, found courage to give it publicity, and from that paper it was learned that the police were instructed to compel everybody to go to church and participate in the sacrament, under severe penalties for neglect of this duty. This astounding measure of coercion for increasing religious sentiment did not command any respect for the person of God's elect, for in 1888 the nihilists made the memorable attempt on the Kursk-Azov railway line near Borki.

This attempt is called officially the fourth, though it is not clear what the preceding three were. There was the story of an "accident" while the Czar was hunting, the story of another "accident" with sledges, and of still another "accident" near Smolensk, and the discovery of dynamite on the railway line, but these are all.

But the year 1888 is too near to us, and those who made attempts are afraid to speak about them; hence the necessity for suppressing names and omitting details.

And now we come to the attempt near Borki.

The Court painter, Zichy, who travelled with the Imperial family, gave the best account of it at a moment when he was inclined to speak without restraint.

On a bright autumn day the Imperial train travelled at full speed on the track, well guarded by soldiers. It was towards noon. The Imperial family were in the dining-car, where lunch was about to be served. The cook and his helps were making the last preparations for it, when one of the chef's assistants was taken suddenly ill.

This happened not very far from Taranovka station, where the train was going to stop for change of engine and for inspection of wheels and axles. The Court physician attended the cook, and having stated that he had fever, with symptoms of some inexplicable ailment, decided that the sick man, whose indisposition it was feared might develop into some contagious disease, could not remain in the Imperial train, but must be left at the next station.

His opinion was logical, natural, and in accordance with the hygienic regulation concerning Imperial journeys. The train stopped, the cook was helped out, provided with medicine and the means for either travelling on by a later ordinary train or for being taken care of at the station, and when the locomotive was changed and wheels and axles had been inspected, the train moved forward towards Borki, travelling at the speed of eighty kilometres an hour. Then the electric bell notified the cook that the Imperial family were ready for luncheon.

A few seconds after the bell sounded a

terrific noise was heard, and a violent explosion changed, in the twinkling of an eye, the luxurious Imperial train into a heap of broken iron, of wrecked cars, of mutilated corpses, enveloped in smoke and made all the more harrowing by the moanings and cries for help of the wounded. The wreckage was so awful that the guards standing on the track never imagined that there could be any possible escape for any one of the Imperial party, but that Alexander III. and his wife and children were killed.

But fate willed differently. The dining-room car that the nihilists had intended should be a grave for the Czar, his family, and his suite, saved him, for although its roof and floor were wrecked, its sides were preserved. They inclined towards the centre, propped each other like two cards, and remained in that position, protecting those who were there from being crushed. Thus the Czar, his wife and children, and everybody that was going to partake of the lunch, were saved. The destructive force of the explosion was mainly expended on servants, cooks, and guards.

This occurrence at Borki made a deep impression on the people, but also furnished food for the legend that the Czar owed his safety to a miracle. Thanksgiving services, fantastic pictures representing the Imperial family surrounded by a halo in the midst of the wreckage, flooded Russia and served to convince the people that their autocratic ruler could not be harmed. The official reports spoke about the miracle, and it was ordered that the day of the providential escape was to be kept as a holy day for ever

and celebrated by prayers and appropriate sermons.

Looking impartially on the attempt at Borki, one must acknowledge that the Imperial family were very lucky in escaping ; they drew from the lottery of life and death the only winning ticket, and perished not.

This incident, however, was so terrible that the Imperial family, notwithstanding the legend about supernatural protection, suffered much, mentally and physically. Alexander III. received a very serious contusion ; so did the Grand Duke George, his second son. The health of the Czarevitch Nicholas suffered, nor was the Czar's sister Olga spared. Everyone who was saved suffered more or less afterwards.

Of course, most energetic investigations followed. The Czar commanded that a report should be brought to him every day. Everything and everybody within a radius of several miles of the scene of the catastrophe was searched ; a number of engineers and chemists were sent to make investigations on the spot.

The Czar grew impatient. Possjet, the innocent minister of communication, was dismissed. Why Possjet ? The railway was in perfect order, it was carefully guarded, and no mine was found. The answer is easy : someone must be punished as no culprits were found, and the result of the investigation could not be published because it might give an exaggerated idea of the power of the Russian revolutionaries and the means of destruction they had at their command.

Zichy, the Court painter, saw the report of

the investigation, and here it is: The author of the attempt was the cook, who had under his immediate care some old-fashioned cones of sugar. One of these cones was provided with a clock apparatus. The cook regulated this apparatus, and, as soon as he had started it, became suddenly ill, having swallowed some medicine prepared for that purpose. The apparatus was perfect, and the cook's calculations were realised.

At the station where the engines were changed the cook was put off, and the train proceeded on its course, carrying with it an infernal machine. The cook did not wait for alarming despatches, nor for news of the effect of the explosion, but, under the pretence that he had some relations in the vicinity of the railway station by whom he would be taken care of, he jumped into a vehicle waiting for him and rushed into the wide world, where he hid so well that to this day it is not known where he went, or even who he was.

The attempt of 1888 made Alexander's isolated life bitter and full of uneasiness. This was not without reason, for facts have shown that such revolutionaries as Chalturin and the cook could penetrate to the Czar's cordon, and almost to his person.

Again all the Imperial servants were questioned as to their antecedents; further, many of them were dismissed, and Russians of the orthodox religion were replaced by Tartars, negroes, and Abyssinians. The Imperial palaces were now full of coloured people, followers of Mahomet and Buddha, as if they were more faithful in their

slavish respect of their lord and master, and inaccessible to Christian propaganda.

Alexander III. was determined to find for himself adequate means of protection, and was quite willing also to adopt any suggested by those about him ; but, still not satisfied, he constantly carried a revolver in one of his pockets. Even that revolver was a cause of sorrow to him.

A few days after the attempt at Borki the Czar sat late in the evening at his bureau reading some State papers. An officer on service was in the next room. It was in the summer, and the heat was almost unbearable for the officer buttoned up in his uniform. Knowing that the Czar would not open the door before midnight, the officer unbuttoned his coat, loosened his belt, put aside his revolver, and sat comfortably on a sofa under the window.

It was against the rules of the service, but it was practised by all officers who were obliged to sit at the Czar's door without anything to do. It was not difficult to avoid being caught, for, in case of being surprised, he could quickly put his attire in order without being noticed. The officer looked through the window on to the empty court of the palace. He was almost tempted to light a cigarette, but was afraid to do so. It was an offence for which he was liable to be dismissed. But this officer was an intelligent courtier ; therefore he took out his snuff-box and treated himself with a big dose of its brown contents. Then he looked with pleasure at the snuff-box. It was of gold, a present from the Czar, and an object of envy on the part of his comrades ; it

was undoubtedly a token of other favours and advancement.

The officer smiled and looked around the room, lighted discreetly by a shaded lamp. He surveyed his future, which seemed to be so bright. . . . Suddenly the door leading to the Czar's study opened noisily, and Alexander III. appeared on the threshold. The Czar's unexpected appearance frightened the officer. He jumped to his feet and retreated into a corner of the room, wishing to put his clothes in order.

To anyone familiar with the reason for the officer's actions all this was comprehensible, but the Czar's impression was quite different.

Alexander III., having opened the door, noticed that the officer on duty retreated confused and bent, instead of straightening himself up; and the Czar imagined the man was preparing to attack him. The Czar trembled. Doubtless the fear of murder burst upon his imagination, and mechanically he put his hand on his revolver.

"Who are you?" the Czar shouted threateningly.

The officer trembled with fear. That moment the gold snuff-box shone before his Majesty's vision, and he fancied it was some deadly weapon. Alexander thereupon rapidly drew his revolver, raised it, fired, and killed the unfortunate officer.

There was a great commotion in the palace. Everybody rushed to the Czar, who was convinced that he had killed a murderer. When the awful mistake was discovered, the Czar was frightened. The confessor Janysheff and Father

John of Cronstadt were provided by this fatality with an opportunity of increasing their influence at the Court.

Yes, Alexander III. was an excellent marksman, capable of taking a first prize ; and he was not only a marksman, but an athlete as well. One must really wonder how a son of an effeminate father got such powerful muscles. He could break horse-shoes, and the exuberance of his physical forces obliged him to take exercise as an amateur wood-cutter. The most beautiful old trees in the park became a prey to the Imperial axe.

But the physical forces, one could say, were developed at the cost of the spiritual. The Czar could neither control himself nor dominate his uneasiness. Alexander III. possessed not one-tenth of the coolness and determination of Alexander II. With the muscles of an athlete, a tall figure, a sonorous, strong voice, he had the most feeble nerves, a sickly imagination, and was superstitious and in continual fear of his life.

Consequently his strong muscles did not help him at all. On the contrary, they increased the tragedy of his position. The officer on duty was not the only victim ; soon a footman, a faithful servant, joined him.

It was in Livadia : the Czar was dozing in the afternoon. The footman was told to wake his Majesty in an hour's time. The footman did as he was told, but it seems Alexander III. was just then in a bad dream, for hardly had the servant touched the Czar in order to arouse him

when he jumped up and, still half asleep, gave the man a kick. From such an athlete the acknowledgment was mortal. The poor footman fell on the floor and expired at the feet of his master. Alexander III. felt that fatal accident deeply, and did everything he could for the dead man's family.

And what became of the nihilists? They did not neglect their work; they plotted and suffered martyrdom; some were killed every day, but every day they made new adherents. The party of the "Narodnaja Vola" apparently disappeared about this time; the fact, however, was that it was divided purposely into many small sections.

The police worked diligently and constantly. The prisons could hardly hold all the political culprits; there was not much room even in *katorga*, but the agitation was increasing. It was bound to increase, for the autocrat was sowing the wind, without any reason. The Russian sceptre was swayed over forty different nationalities, of which only a few were Slavs, and the Russian rulers wished to have all those nationalities alike. For that purpose the Russian government attacked the traditional faith and natural rights of quiet Finlanders, humble Tartars, desperate Poles and Lithuanians, laborious Armenians, Georgians, loyal Kurlanders and Estonians. The Russians themselves were treated in the same way: Malorussians, Bialorussians, and Wielikorussians were put under Draconian laws.

Not only the Jews and Mahomedans, not only Protestants and Catholics, were persecuted by

the Russian government, but those of the Orthodox Church as well ; and all the cults of the Greek faith, if they differed however slightly from the views of the Czar's confessors, Janysheff, Father John of Cronstadt, and Pobiedonosceff.

It is true that some of the Russian sects were socially wrong, and it was the duty of the government to assail them, but darkness must be dispersed with light, while the absolutist believed only in the knout, katorga, and the gallows. In that way the sectarians were furnished with martyrs, and their zeal was increased instead of being diminished by teaching and indulgence. This was, and is, the reason why revolutionaries increase in numbers, the government stirring up new foes by its own action.

In the meanwhile Alexander was proclaimed "Peacemaker" ! Shortsighted Europe, prompted by egotistical, perverse politics, expressed its admiration for the Czar's peaceful tendencies, while from the time of Peter I. there had not been on the Russian throne another monarch who had made so many bloody wars upon his own unarmed people.

Alexander III. feared a war with an armed adversary, for he knew that his enemies within would help his enemies without. But Alexander's domestic wars were not less disastrous than were the Franco-Prussian or Turco-Russian wars, for during his rule more than a hundred thousand people were killed, or as good as killed. Yes, Alexander III. was peacefully inclined only towards his neighbours, but he was a merciless annihilator of his own subjects.

The attempt near Borki was not isolated. There was a rumour that three days before that attempt a Kuban Cossack armed with bombs was caught in Kutais, in the Caucasus. It was also said that on March 1st, 1887, the sixth anniversary of Alexander II.'s death, five students were arrested near Kazan Cathedral; those students had wished to greet the Czar with bombs, and as they were hanged the story seems to be true. Then various mines were spoken about, poisons, bombs, etc., with which the Czar's life was threatened. The attempt at Borki was only a link of a long chain of political assassination in darkest Russia.

In January, 1890, the chief of the secret police in Moscow, Zolotushin, met the same fate as Sudejkin. In November of the same year General Selivestroff, former chief of police and chief of inquisition of the "Third Division of the Imperial Chancery," resuscitated by Alexander III., was shot in the Baden Hotel in Paris.

This murder produced energetic activity on the part of the Russian Embassy, and severe measures would have been adopted if the murderer had not found faithful friends in Mme. Severine and the journalist Gregoire, and if he had not fled to Belgium and thence to America. But the motives for this murder were more of a private than of a political character. Selivestroff came to Paris not only to find easy conquests amongst Parisian *demi-mondaines*, but also to see what the Russian police did in Paris. It was proved afterwards that the murderer should be regarded rather as an avenger than as an execu-

tioner of a death warrant, for Selivestroff was killed by Padlewski, brother of the revolutionary who in 1878 died in a hospital in St. Petersburg after torture administered to him during an investigation. That murder caused much annoyance to the government of the Third Republic.

Selivestroff's death furnished the Russian papers with an opportunity of drawing illogical parallels between the murders of Humbert I. and that of the Russian official. Beschi was linked with Padlewski, and again the Russian government made an effort to persuade Europe that Russian revolutionary movements arose from the same source as did anarchism in other parts of Europe.

Those dissertations lasted for several months, till, all of a sudden, they were stopped, muffled by strange news that came from the Imperial palace. The news referred to a quarrel between the Czar and his son, the heir to the throne.

The Czarevitch was then twenty-one. Till then very little had been said about him. Gossip reported from time to time that the Czarevitch was in ill-health, that his illness was of the same character as that produced by a pernicious habit of the first son of Alexander II., who died at Nice.

Therefore, when the news of a quarrel between father and son was spread, the surprise was so much the greater, for it appeared to contradict all the unfavourable reports about the Czarevitch's character and disposition.

According to these reports, the heir to the throne had noticed that Alexander III. was in the habit of signing certain papers without

reading them, on account of the great amount of labour involved. The Czarevitch had the courage to speak to his father about this, making a remark that it was not fair to sign papers of which he did not know the contents. The Czar punished him by detention in his own apartments. The son, however, would not be baffled like that, and having drafted a formal order to the minister of the Court, by which the Czarina was to be expelled from the country within forty-eight hours, put the mandate, bearing his signature, on his father's desk. The Czarevitch was in the habit of obtaining in that way various favours for his suite. The Czar signed the document. Having received it back the Czarevitch obtained an audience with the Czar, and having repeated to him his previous view, showed the order, which proved that Alexander III., carried away by the practice of writing his name so perfunctorily, banished his own wife and the Czarevitch's mother.

Alexander was furious. Thunderbolts of wrath fell on the Czarevitch, and it was so serious and so lasting that there was a question of changing the successor to the throne. The immediate effect of the Emperor's anger was that the Czarevitch was sent away from the Court under the pretext that it was necessary for him to travel in the far Orient.

How much truth there is in this story, and how much of fancy, it is difficult to say, on account of the proximity of events. But it is a fact that in the autumn of 1891 the Czarevitch went to Siberia.

A journey in a country where no member of the reigning family had ever before set foot,

might have been very profitable to the youthful Czarevitch if it had not been that the Siberian satraps had been instructed to conceal from him what Siberia was really like. He did not dare to ask about political prisoners, or to seek to penetrate the secrets of Siberian misery, for Alexander III. had given strict orders to prevent it.

The heir to the throne had no illusions, however, and knew that the only reason for his journey was to punish him for having opposed his father. He did not expect to find anything there but the tediousness of official receptions, nor did he expect, either, that an attempt would be made on his life.

On April 23rd, 1891, while riding through Otser, near Kioto, in Japan, the Czarevitch was attacked by a Japanese policeman. The Greek Prince who accompanied the Czarevitch parried the blows of the man's sword, but the Czarevitch received a painful wound on the head, and this had serious consequences on the health of the future Czar of Russia. The would-be murderer was arrested and imprisoned.

An official investigation of the affair attributed it to fanaticism; some persons said it was an attempt to settle a personal account for a wrong, and a woman's name was mentioned in this connection; while others regarded it as another effort of the nihilists.

In the meanwhile, in St. Petersburg, they were not so much concerned for the Czarevitch's health as for that of his father. The miraculous preservation of the Czar from the catastrophe at

Borki, which made the Grand Duchess Olga a cripple, did not prevent the injury then received by his Majesty from undermining his constitution; he developed a complicated illness, which threatened a disease of the kidneys. The advice of the greatest European physicians was sought, combined with the religious ministrations of Father John of Cronstadt and the confessor Janysheff, but these things did not help the Czar at all. Alexander III. continued seriously ill. Professor Leiden, summoned from Berlin, agreed with the Russian Professor Zacharin, and expressed the opinion that the Czar would not live long. Professor Zacharin was deputed to tell the Czar the sad news. Alexander III. replied by throwing an inkstand at Zacharin; after which he called all the chaplains of the Court to his side and commanded them to pray for him.

The psychological state of the Czar at this time bordered on madness, notwithstanding which he still wished to rule. The Imperial family, headed by the Czarevitch, gathered round the Czar's bed. Alexander III. handed to his son a ukase, which was to be issued after his death, and made him solemnly promise that he would change nothing in it. It seemed that the dying autocrat was afraid his son would act under the impulse of more liberal ideas, which he hated. Pobiedonosceff was present and promised to see that the Czar's last will was carried out. He proved, indeed, to be a good guardian of the political will of the Czar, for when, on November 1st, 1894, Alexander III. died, his monstrous system of ruling was not changed.

Alexander III., notwithstanding the appearances of natural death, was also a victim of darkest Russia, for the attempt at Borki undoubtedly shortened his life considerably. Alexander's constitution was very powerful, and he should have reached a ripe old age, whereas he died at forty-nine, having reigned thirteen years.

During those thirteen years Alexander III. fought with his own tribulations, uneasiness, and tortures, the retribution of keeping his people under the dread of knout, katorga, and death, and all that could bring on him only the maledictions, hatred, and contempt of his oppressed subjects. He tried to produce order within his realm, but he acted like a madman trying to extinguish a fire with a can of petroleum.

Alexander's life was a sad and bitter one ; so much so, that all the homage he received from Europe was not able to alleviate the effect of the poison that made him suffer, mighty amongst the mighties though he was. And to ponder over his gloomy lot would be to feel commiseration for him, if the moanings and pleadings of thousands of poor wretches did not call to us from the prisons and katorga. He built churches to God and prisons for the people. He complained of his lot, and liked to hear round him words of sympathy, but he was dumb to the complaints of others, and merciless to other people's sufferings.

Alexander III. died, and his death, mayhap, aroused sincere sorrow in the hearts of the Cherevins, the Orzevskis, the Klingenberges, the Von Wahls, the Hurkos, the Pobiedonsceffs, and similar men, who were only a little more refined

than were Ivan the Terrible's myrmidons ; but among his subjects his death was received with gratitude proportionate to the hopes they had in the successor to the throne—hopes destined to be disappointed.

Nicholas II. was twenty-five years old when he came to the throne. He was young, and had round him millions of benevolent subjects, whose hearts were longing for the love of their monarch.

Tzar est mort ! Vive le Tzar !

CHAPTER XVIII

Bad prospects for Nicholas II., in view of the history of his predecessors—Nicholas II. influenced by Pobiedonosceff and afterwards by the homage he received from Germany and France—Nicholas's two mistresses, Labunska and Krysinska—His influence on the Court diminished because of the lack of an heir—Palace intrigue and the way it was stopped by the Czar—The Czarevitch George's lonely life in the Crimea and his death—Influence of the Grand Dukes Vladimir and Sergius—Story about the Grand Duke Nicholas Constantinovich.

HISTORY repeats itself, consequently we to some extent predict the future from the past.

Nicholas II. ascended the Russian throne in 1894, three hundred and ten years after Ivan the Terrible; he is the twenty-sixth Czar; the nineteenth after the first Romanov; the thirteenth autocrat, Peter I. being the first; the eighth of the name Holstein-Gottorp; the fifth descendant from Paul I. The facts concerning Nicholas's twenty-five predecessors can be summarised thus:

Of the twenty-five rulers of Russia twelve of them were murdered, the death of six suggested murder, one of them took his own life, and six died natural deaths (of whom three were women). Consequently, only three Czars died in the ordinary way, namely Michael Theodorovich, Alexis Michaelovich, and Peter II.

If from these facts one could forecast the life of Nicholas II., it would be a very sad one, for

he is the fifth after the murder of Paul I. Such a deduction would be absurd if not backed up by other facts.

The last Czar whose life was shortened by illness was Peter II., and the last ruler to die a natural death was Elizabeth. Then followed Peter III., murdered; Catherine II., whose death was suspicious; Paul I., murdered; Alexander I., mysterious; Nicholas I., suicide; Alexander II., murdered; and Alexander III., who died as the result of an attempt on his life.

Twenty-five Russian rulers have made sixteen *coups d'état* and committed twelve regicides; three of them committed murders directly, the others acted through assassins. The last regicide was Alexander I. The last Czar murdered for the sake of the usurpation of the throne was Paul I.

It is doubtful whether Nicholas II. ever thought over those gloomy facts; he received an education, fitted for his future position, under the supervision of his reactionary father and reactionary tutor, General Danilovich. It is almost certain that historical truth was hidden from him, otherwise he would not have allowed himself to build a monument to Catherine II. at Wilno. Historical truth in Russia is considered a State treason, and there is no professor in the whole of that country who would dare to mention the actual facts about the murder of Peter III. or that of Paul I. Even such a conscientious student of history as Schylder, when he had to speak about the death of a certain Czar, cut short his historical references and was silent.

There is no doubt that Nicholas II. not only had no opportunity of knowing his predecessors, but he was unable to get a broad view of his own mission. Priests, Pobiedonosceff, police, and European politics convinced the young Czar that by following in his father's steps he would fulfil the duties of a ruler. He seemed to understand by intuition that his duties were different, that there was a better world and a better life, but by some fatality those notions became obscure in his mind.

It is impossible to believe that the Russian autocrat failed to hear the moanings and complaints of a hundred and twenty millions of his subjects, that he could not have seen a difference between Russia and other countries. His surroundings, however, acted upon him, and Europe helped the Russian reactionaries and bloody satraps to make the Czar blind and deaf. Nicholas II. knew that the peasants implored that they should not be knouted, that his other subjects beseeched that they should not be punished without trial and defence, that the police should not drag them to church, that they should be freed from mercenary officials, that law should be law and not depend on the humour of a minister, that they should be allowed to study, and that they should be free to defend themselves from official thieves.

Nicholas II. knew all that, and although he had no definite plans, he said something about reforms, and spoke about equality before the law, and so on.

This lasted but a very short time, however.

Foreign travel induced the young monarch to turn towards reaction, for his journeys had been one uninterrupted triumph and one continual rapture. Western Europe, urged on by politicians, showed its enthusiasm.

The Russian people listened with disgust to the acclamations that resounded in France and in Germany in honour of their oppressors, for they could not understand that nations with such a high culture should have forgotten that the Russian absolute ruler represented the negation of everything of which they were proud.

And a bitter smile showed on the mouths of intelligent Russians, for they thought that so-called civilised nations were in their egotism but vulgar barbarians, that it was useless to count on them for help. They preferred the smile of one autocrat to the gratitude of a hundred and twenty million honest hearts of his subjects. The Russian people could not understand how it was that France began to bow to the throne, only when she got the Third Republic, when the words "*liberté, égalité, fraternité*," displayed in large letters on all government buildings, became as familiar as the police order, "Stick no bills."

As for Nicholas II., he had an abundance of proof that even Western Europe, even foreign nations, even heads of free people, bowed to the Russian throne and approved of the Russian form of government. In this way the reaction became finally victorious. In order to understand that climax, a few more facts should be recapitulated.

A few months before Alexander III.'s death a

marriage was arranged between Nicholas II. and the Duchess of Hesse-Darmstadt, but on account of the illness and death of the "Peacemaker" the wedding ceremony was postponed. It was celebrated one month after Alexander's death, and this was done in order to have, as soon as possible, an heir to the throne. For the time being, the Czar's brother George was heir-presumptive. George was in ill-health and obliged to live in the Crimea. According to Court gossip, George was disliked by his father for his liberal ideas and for the love he had conceived, not for a princess, but for a subject.

It was true that Nicholas, while yet Czarevitch, had changed Miss Labunska for a ballet girl, Krysinska, and spent all his moments of leisure with her, but Nicholas was an obedient son and did as he was told. Consequently, when the negotiations for his marriage were begun with the Court of Hesse, Nicholas provided Krysinska with a house, assured her an income, made her first dancer of the Court, and lived no more with her.

As for George, he did not care to follow his brother's example, and when Alexander died he married secretly the woman he loved. He was then asked to resign the right of succession to the throne in favour of his brother Michael. George did it without hesitation. His health had been very bad since the affair at Borki; being threatened with consumption, he was sent away from Court, surrounded by officers, and was directed to live near the Black Sea.

In the meanwhile, instead of the much-desired

son, the young Czarina, Alexandra, gave birth to a daughter. This made the Czar and Czarina's position feebler, for the Russian Court, like every other Court, cares about the future. Moreover, the Russian Court knows by experience that if human life is only a lamp that can be extinguished with a puff of wind, the life of a Czar is only a candle, which can be extinguished still quicker. The Russian Court was therefore compelled to take care of the one who might be a successor to the throne, was obliged to count upon the possibility of the youngest son of Alexander III., the Grand Duke Michael, and to be complaisant to the Dowager Czarina, who was constantly with her beloved son, as well as to the Grand Duke Vladimir, who might become successor if in turn the Grand Duke Michael did not survive.

The autocratic Czar, therefore, willy-nilly, was obliged to share his power. Moreover, Nicholas II. did not think of disobeying his mother, his uncles, and Pobiedonosceff. He seemed to be satisfied with the existing order of things, and was happy if he could see smiling faces around him.

In 1896 there were rumours in St. Petersburg of a Palace insurrection, and it was said that the young Czar had discovered a plot, the purpose of which was to force him to abdicate in favour of his brother Michael, with the Dowager Czarina as Regent. The same rumour asserted that the Czar had called to his apartment the members of his family, and when they were all there he pressed the electric button and called up the guards, who burst into the Czar's room by a secret door. Then the Czar said a few words in

English, which were not understood by the guards, but were clear enough to the members of the Imperial family.

This news was known to outsiders only by the fact that the guards were called up and that the soldiers heard the Czar's angry voice. The information about the Palace insurrection was not confirmed beyond the walls of the palace. The Imperial family, then, seemed to live in harmony. The Grand Dukes' civil lists were increased, and they began to rule on their own account and in their own way.

If the Czar got to hear of some scandal regarding his relatives, he frowned, grew gloomy, but that was all. Being good-hearted and of a mild disposition, he permitted himself to be deceived by any artful explanation that might be given to him. In that way he won the popular nickname of "Nicka," signifying that his courtiers could do anything they liked with him.

To add to the Czar's perplexities, the Czarina continued to present her husband with daughters only, and the dynasty was regarded as in danger of a deviation. The Grand Duke Michael's importance, or rather that of his mother and of Pobiedonosceff, increased. In 1899 the Grand Duke George died, and the Grand Duke Michael became officially the heir to the throne. George had died as the result of an accident with a motor-cycle, in Abbas Tuman. Did he fall and kill himself? No; his fate was decided. The Grand Duke could do anything except prolong his life.

Consumptive and neurasthenic, he persisted in

riding a motor-cycle, notwithstanding the fact that he often suffered from hæmorrhage. During one of his excursions, while riding his motor-cycle at full speed he was attacked with hæmorrhage and fell over on a rock.

Naturally, no one was with him, for who was there to care about the Czar's brother in disgrace? He was found by a poor peasant woman. He had all his senses, and could speak, but was slowly dying. The peasant woman, for her Good Samaritan deed towards the Grand Duke, whom she did not know, was rewarded with an official visit to her hut and was forbidden to speak of the occurrence.

The Grand Duke Michael's proclamation as heir to the throne made Maria Theodorovna's party stronger—for all the Grand Dukes who were on her side were also on the side of Pobiedonosceff. The most influential of the Grand Dukes were Sergius and Vladimir: the latter because of seniority and right to the succession after Michael, and the former because of his personal friendship with the Czar and of his closer relationship, Sergius's wife being the sister of the Czarina Alexandra. Their influence was detrimental to the Russian people as well as to the Russian throne, for they were always rabid reactionaries, who were afraid that a Constitution would make them responsible before the law for their abuses.

Vladimir and Sergius, although they quarrelled, when danger was imminent acted together. There were still the Grand Duke Alexis and the

grandfather Michael, but they played less important parts.

But Alexander II. had a sixth son, Paul, who, being the youngest uncle of Nicholas II., perhaps would have been forgotten if it had not been for his love towards the Countess Pistoletskas, their flight abroad, their marriage in Livorno, followed by complete disgrace and banishment. Those adventures gained some sympathy for Paul in Russia, and caused him to be spoken of as a prince with great qualities of heart.

Nicholas II.'s relations often furnished interesting material for scandals: the story of the Grand Duchess Ksenia Alexandrovna, the sojourn in Cannes of such a character as Maria Pavlovna, and the tale of the mysterious State prisoner, the Grand Duke Nicholas Constantino-vich. But none of the official genealogies of the Imperial house mention such a name! At least this had not been done for twenty-five years.

Nicholas Constantinovich! Yes, the eldest son of the one who died in 1892. Constantine Nicolaievich was, therefore, the son of the one who disputed with Alexander II. about the throne. He was Alexander III.'s first cousin, and second cousin of Nicholas II., brother of the Queen of the Hellenes and of the Grand Dukes Constantine and Dimitri Constantinovich, born in 1850.

This Grand Duke, unknown to official Russia, was the one who was accused in 1881, after Alexander II.'s murder, of sympathy with the nihilists, and had been sent the same year to Tashkend and afterwards transported to Stavropol, where he is kept under supervision of the

police. This long imprisonment of a Grand Duke gives colour to a rumour that he made plans for seizing the crown, with the help of the nihilists, for his father Constantine Nicolaievich, and then, in the way of succession, for himself.

To be more precise, one should recall to memory that there was a story told about the prisoner, who had to be kept under arrest, for he had awful propensities, the proof of which was that, having ruined himself when he was young for the then famous beauty, Fanny Blakfort, he had stolen diamonds that ornamented some venerable *ikona* in the chapel of his father. But this story seems to be told in order to take from the prisoner the halo of martyrdom and in that way to dispel all sympathy for the unfortunate man. This story seems to have been made up by the "Imperial protection," which is afraid of a new "Pugachevshchizna" under the banner of Nicholas Constantinovich. It seems to have been taken from the life of Hurko, son of the notorious satrap, who committed a theft and made a murderous attack on Senator Polvoceff, in Nice, and who, caught in Paris, was permitted by the amiable French authorities to take poison or to be poisoned in prison. In that way they slandered the exile: they preferred to make a criminal of a Grand Duke rather than to admit in him a political culprit.

CHAPTER XIX

Bad omens for Nicholas II.'s reign—Catastrophe during the Coronation—Famine—Shameful confiscation of money gathered for famine-stricken provinces—Absolutism executing so-called "last wills"—Finland and its servility towards Russia for the price of a Constitution—Revolutionary movement in Finland—Why the attempts are directed against high officials and not against the Czar—Stratagem adopted by Balmasheff to kill Sipiagin—Plehve and his savageries—Japanese war and Pobiedonosceff—Why the Grand Dukes and Ministers wanted war.

NICHOLAS II. ruled. Deep silence prevailed throughout the empire. Revolutionaries, socialists, democrats, and all who were dissatisfied under the Russian sceptre were silent; they did not wish to lose even one word of the Czar's expected proclamation.

Russia was not discouraged by the first manifesto of Nicholas II.; Russia guessed that it was not a programme, but an act of respect for his father's memory; Russia tried to justify its ruler, and did not wish to disturb expectation. Bad omens for the new ruler showed themselves.

In the first place, there was the disaster during the Coronation in Moscow, when two thousand people were killed. That sad occurrence, the result of criminal neglect on the part of the local administration, filled the air with moaning instead of exclamations of joy. The Grand Duke Sergius, as Governor-General of Moscow,

was primarily to be blamed for it. It was expected that the memory of two thousand corpses would help Moscow to get rid of the Czar's hated uncle. In vain! His position remained unshakeable, and it must have been strong if even the protestations of his wife, the Czarina Alexandra's sister, were of no avail.

After the Moscow calamity there was a famine. Famine in an agricultural country exporting millions of bushels of wheat! Famine under such conditions that while in one province the people were suffering from typhoid fever caused by lack of food, in another province immense quantities of grain were rotting because of the lack of purchasers.

News of the famine in Russia was spread far and wide by harrowing announcements, and urgent appeals for help were put forth by the highest authorities. Subscriptions were commanded, and a committee was appointed to receive them. The millions that were thus collected became a prey to official thieves. The result was the discovery of the most dishonest actions by the committee, loss of public money, and the death from hunger of several thousand people, not in a desert, but in a fertile country—in honest Europe if it had not been for the nihilists.

The reign of Nicholas began by death!

And Russia? Russia set its teeth and waited patiently. There were political murders in other countries. In Russia everything was quiet, as if the nihilists had disappeared.

The first four years of the rule of Nicholas II. passed in expectation, varied only by outbreaks

of students. These disturbances were interrupted, but not altogether stopped. The Czar did not understand the reason of the uneasiness, and when there was a momentary lull throughout the country he permitted absolutism to have its way, and began to execute the so-called "last wills," namely, to complete plans conceived by Peter I., Catherine II., and Nicholas I. Those "last wills" bequeathed to the Orthodox Church the submission of all people who were under the Russian sceptre; they were to be forced to worship the Orthodox God in Heaven and the Orthodox Czar on earth.

Those "last wills" were very much in favour with military men and officials, for they furnished them with a good opportunity to fill their pockets and to gain honours.

So well chained were the subjects of the White Czar that it was difficult to chain them firmer, but to the great joy of the myrmidons of absolutism there was found a "last will" which said that as soon as there was quiet in the country the Constitution of Finland should be taken away.

Finland had preserved its Constitution and self-government, and this preservation was maintained at the cost of humility bordering on villainy, by constantly burning incense to the barbarous Czar. Finland guarded her own rights, but she furnished the Russian autocrats with the most faithful servants, the most zealous partisans of absolutism, in which she competed with the denaturalised German nobility from the Baltic provinces. This little country was so loyal, notwithstanding its Swedish sympathies, that it was

impossible to find a pretext to take from it its Constitution. "The last will," however, had its rights and Nicholas II. turned his sword against Finland.

This "last will" was not appreciated, either by Finnish or Russian young people. It is true that after Alexander III.'s death, General Bagdanovic had distributed several millions of coloured engravings, representing the "ascension"—yes, ascension—of the "Peacemaker," wearing the full uniform of a general, who was being received by God, surrounded by the Czar's ancestors; but those pictures had no influence on the young men, because after struggling vainly with difficulties in Finland for a time the old agitation was resumed.

Did only the young men groan in dissatisfaction? Of course not. They, being younger and more fiery, constituted the vanguard of the movement, or rather of the thousands of movements, which, like so many streams, flowed in one direction.

Nicholas II. became alarmed, and turned to his intimates for advice, or rather for an order. An order was given, and it was to suppress mercilessly every protest. The police turned up their sleeves and set to work as during the best times of nihilism. But the times and people were now different, and secret societies were so numerous and varied that confiscation of printing machines, seizures of bombs and arrests could not stop the movement.

The socialists were now numbered by thousands, and thousands of liberals of different

shades of thinking arose ; religious persecutions furnished every day fresh foes ; suppressed races demanded their natural rights ; ignorant people, worried by police and officials—all of them rose against the government.

This time it was not the evil of one party, but thousands of burning questions assailed the throne. The throne, remembering the "last wills," ordered the knout. Then the unruly students were ordered to be put into the army for five years.

This radical means of introducing order into universities prompted the shooting of several young men who, being put forcibly into the military ranks, refused to take the oath. The disorders in all university towns in Russia continued, the disturbances being at last ended by the massacre of unarmed people before Kazan Cathedral in St. Petersburg by the orders of Kleigels. This massacre was such a great iniquity that it prompted Prince Wiaziemski, general and member of the State Council, to censure Kleigels very severely. Kleigels complained to the Czar. Kleigels was a policeman, so the Prince Wiaziemski was scolded.

The Russian nation ceased to cherish illusions, but the Russian nation had so much goodwill for its ruler, and believed so firmly that the young Czar was unwilling to employ the old monstrous methods, that it turned its hatred against his advisers—against those who stood between the Czar and his subjects.

This change of front was justified, as it seemed, by the fact that the Czar—the merciless Czar, who

could sign the most atrocious decrees—was the same Czar who every time anyone succeeded in approaching him was always indulgent, forgave easily, and was well-disposed. The people had noticed this, and no longer doubted that the autocrat was only a tool in Pobiedonosceff's hands, as well as in those of the Dowager Czarina, the Grand Dukes, and the police ; that he was, like the Tibetan Dalai-Lama, kept under guards ; that he himself was a prisoner, deceived by those around him and scared by bombs, without any idea of what was going on beyond the walls of his palace.

The people persuaded themselves that the tragedy of Nicholas's autocratic rule was due to his being deceived by flatterers who pretended to see in him qualities which he did not possess. Many facts could be brought forward to prove that this ruler of a hundred and twenty millions had no ideas concerning the simplest practical questions of government.

One of the chambermaids of the Czarina Alexandra was going to be married. The minister of the Court, the Baron Friederyks, had mentioned this to the Czar, while submitting to him a list of the household expenses, and hinted that, according to Court custom, a dowry should be given to the maid.

Nicholas II. was embarrassed as to the amount he should fix. Finally he said :

“ Give her a hundred thousand roubles.”

The minister of the Court bowed respectfully to his Majesty and ventured to say that a hundred thousand roubles was too much.

"Too much?" said the Czar. "H'm! if you think it is too much, then give her a hundred roubles!"

And the Russian people, having changed front, changed their tactics also, directing the flood of terrorism against the Czar's advisers, the true autocrats.

This new policy was soon made manifest.

Five days after the massacre in Kazan Square, Nicholas Logowski fired at Pobiedonossceff. The police had not yet succeeded in capturing Logowski when, on March 15th, 1900, an attempt was made to shoot Sipiagin, the minister of the interior; and on March 30th, Bogolepoff, the minister of instruction, was killed.

The reactionaries answered by katorga and arrests. Wannowski, an old and incapable general, was made minister of instruction. Wannowski, apparently, was in favour of some reforms. He said that the public instruction department was too much dominated by spies and police, and, in fact, had done nothing.

After Bogolepoff's murder there was again a lull, interrupted only by police raids, led by Sipiagin, till in 1902 Sipiagin was shot. As in the case of Bogolepoff, the murderer was again a student, intelligent and highly moral. The murder caused a panic amongst the satraps of St. Petersburg: much more so, as Sipiagin had no illusions in regard to the sentiments the nihilists had for him, and spared no money for his *garde du corps*. The minister of the interior spent two hundred thousand roubles for his personal defence! He would never go out without a host of detectives.

But the murderer, Balmasheff, had conceived and realised a very daring plan, one never before used in a political attack. On April 15th, 1902, to the building in which a council of ministers was being held, came a carriage from which alighted an *aide-de-camp* of the Czar. The *aide-de-camp* was announced to Sipiagin. The arrival of such an officer with despatches from the Grand Duke Sergius surprised no one, for it was an everyday occurrence. Sipiagin came out to the *aide-de-camp*, and although it struck him that he had never seen the officer before he took the letter offered to him, and while he was tearing open the envelope a mortal shot was fired at him.

There was such a panic that the pretended *aide-de-camp* could very easily have escaped. Balmasheff, however, did not budge or try to decline responsibility for the murder. When, however, they were ready to take care of him, Balmasheff handed his sword quietly to General Wannowski and expressed his satisfaction that he had rid the world of a blackguard and a scoundrel.

One would have thought that the murder of two ministers within thirteen months ought to have caused the government to ponder over the meaning of the fact, if for no other reason than that even the most reactionary person dared not discuss nihilism, and that the most conservative were constrained to admit that some changes were necessary to suit the changed times.

The Russian government thought nothing of improving internal relations, reasoning that it

would be cowardice on the part of the Czar to introduce reforms while terrorism was rampant. In the first place, the revolutionary spirit must be entirely suppressed, and then, when loyal quiet prevailed, this and that should be altered.

This decision spurred the police on again, and within a month of Sipiagin's murder the governor of Wilno, General von Wahl, was fired at ; and in August of the same year an attempt was made upon Prince Obolenski, the governor of Charkoff. The Czar bestowed all possible honours and rewards on the victims of duty, and did not even think of inquiring why Von Wahl and Obolenski had aroused such hatred.

In the meanwhile, Von Plehve was appointed minister of the interior. He was one of the perverted Germans who for centuries had served the Holstein-Gottorps. The new minister's reputation was made : he rendered great services during the investigation of the attempt with bombs in March, 1881 (Zelaboff, Perovskaya, and others) ; his past service as a policeman was most brilliant, consequently he had all the necessary qualities for ruling over a population of a hundred and twenty million.

Plehve did not disappoint Pobiedonosceff. During the first two months, without any trials, he sent six hundred people to Siberia, and imprisoned an equal number. His method of procedure was very simple. If one revolutionary was found hiding amongst a hundred people, if it was certain that he was amongst them, but it was impossible to distinguish him, then all of them were arrested and sent to Siberia. Thus

he made sure that the guilty one would be punished.

Plehve's energy stirred the whole empire, and hundreds of addresses were sent to the Czar, with supplications, prayers, remonstrations, and appeals. But Plehve had power over marshals of the nobility and loyal citizens. The minister was merciless towards everybody; he spared no one.

During all this time Nicholas II. played the part of the autocrat, although Pobiedonosceff ruled, and he was pleased with his idea of a peace conference, while his ministers were preparing a war behind his back; he was indignant at the assassinations committed in Belgrade, but that crime was abetted by Russian nobles; the same was the case with the attempt on Ferdinand in Bulgaria. In general, the Czar would censure different criminal acts as if he resided in London and not in St. Petersburg, where heinous murders and atrocities were of daily occurrence.

Plehve worked hard, but murderous shots again resounded, and at the end of 1903 the governor of the Caucasus, Galicyn, and the chief of the police in Bielostock, Mietlenka, had been killed.

In December, 1903, war was declared with Japan. "Nicholas does not wish for war," said the European papers, and it was true; but Pobiedonosceff, the Grand Dukes, and the ministers wished it. The Oberprocurator of the Synod had seen in the war a safety-valve, through which all revolutionary movements would find an escape, and elements dangerous to the State

would be annihilated ; besides, the whole of Manchuria would be made orthodox.

The war was almost a necessity for the Grand Dukes and the ministers. It would draw attention from a serious and imminent danger that was threatening them ; this danger was in connection with the millions spent by them for their own purposes instead of in building railways and fortifying Port Arthur. It was worse than another Panama scandal.

That war was going to legalise the annexation of the Chinese province, and then would ensue the fulfilment of Peter I.'s "last will," by which he desired that Russia should have a port that would not be frozen for the greater part of the year.

The "last will" persuaded the Czar, and war began. Strictly speaking, there burst out another—the internal war.

European diplomacy was frightened, for a war meant, it was supposed, an increase of Russian influence in the Orient, and this fear lasted even after the first Japanese victory. The Russian people could not understand at first why they should pour out their blood in Asia ; the Russian people did not understand the importance of a port that did not freeze, nor could they understand the importance of a great outlay on railways, nor take personal interest in those who directed the affairs of the empire, and they thought that the war simply meant a quelling of rebellion in some Japanese province.

But events soon developed in the way they had done in the Crimean War, and those who

were responsible for the iniquities committed, endeavoured to throw the whole opprobrium on the soldiers.

Before Kuropatkin's army beheld the Japanese, however, the Russian people had seen thieves. What kind of thieves they were the following authentic story will serve to show. The minister of communication, Possjet, was in the dining-room with the Imperial family during the catastrophe at Borki. Wits of the Court say that when the explosion took place Possjet, prompted by an instinctive movement before all, put into his pocket a silver spoon he had in his hand at the time.

The seething in Russia increased because of abuses during mobilisation, followed by defeats, and the scandalous behaviour of the Grand Duke Boris, whose representation of the Imperial family at the war was limited to drinking and assaulting the sisters of charity. On the top of that there was the incapacity of those who were at the head of the government.

CHAPTER XX

Why the Russian nation felt more deeply than ever the defeats by the Japanese—Plehve killed and forgotten—Prince Mirski and a Constitution—The Grand Dukes alarmed—Bulgalin and Trepoff—Bloody Sunday, the only victory of the Russian army—Sergius blown to pieces by a bomb—The Russian government gain time—Nicholas II. deceives the deputies—Witte, his character and his anticipated success—What the Russian nation thought of his negotiations—Federation of all secret societies and its result—Pretended Constitution—Six months after its promulgation seventy thousand people imprisoned and deported—What Europe said to all that.

THE prevailing disorder made the secret societies more daring. Russian subjects were familiar with a degree of misery surpassed only by that of the subjects of the Sultan. They were so accustomed to official robberies that their indignation was aroused only where an official was not stealing in proportion to his rank; they were also accustomed to katorga, the gallows, and the knout. But they had never before felt the country's defeats so deeply, for although the Russian armies might have been beaten in former times, the defeats had been inflicted by the armies of nations in the front rank of civilisation, while now the defeats were inflicted by a petty nation of Asiatic islanders. The subjects of the Czar then realised the misery and disappointment of illiterate people; they fathomed the depth of their ignorance.

In vain the government tried to arouse

patriotic sentiments by artificial means ; the bell, from which the clapper had been taken away, did not sound. Long articles concerning the inferiority of the yellow races did not help, nor did the ridiculous and flattering appeals to hungry, barefooted, ill-treated, ignorant, beggarly regiments help matters much. To be told that they were the defenders of European civilisation against Asiatic barbarians was useless ; nor did the lifting aloft of the holy images, with which the Czar had blessed the soldiers he was sending to death, avail either.

Russia gnashed its teeth, but not against the Japanese. News of fresh disasters was greeted with sarcastic smiles. The only words of compassion the Russians had when they learned of the death of Admiral Makaroff and of the escape of the Grand Duke Cyril, was the remark that "iron sinks but dirt floats."

And what had become of the nihilists ? They disappeared amongst groaning millions conscious of the necessity for change, begging no more for reforms, but ready to take them by force.

Absolutism was frightened and began to mutter something about permitting certain classes to have a voice in State affairs. In the meanwhile, Plehve was trying to strengthen the chains that were breaking. As for the Czar, he notified that he intended to make a pilgrimage to the relics of Saint Seraphine, the purpose of the pilgrimage being, according to Pobiedonosceff's suggestion, to strengthen the religious spirit amongst the people. He was also going to the Caucasus to bless the regiments sent to death. But here the

ministers of the Court intervened. There were not enough soldiers to guard the railway line from St. Petersburg to the Caucasus, and then, seeing the general dissatisfaction, even the guarding of the whole line might not have been sufficient to protect the Czar's life.

And Nicholas II. moaned in sorrow.

When the guns were fired on the banks of the Jal, as fortified Laojan heights, the sounds were echoed by the bombs of the revolutionaries, by war cries on the banks of the Neva and the Volga and the Dnieper and the Vistula.

To the first fire, Bobrikoff, Governor-General of Finland, was exposed. He was killed by Schaudman, the son of a senator, a youth of great moral and intellectual worth. The Russian government threatened reprisals, and wanted to take advantage of the murder to deprive Finland of all privileges, when on July 17th, 1904, at the other end of the empire, Andrejeff, vice-governor of Elizavetpol, was murdered. Eleven days later an explosion of dynamite bombs blew to pieces the minister of the interior, Von Plehve.

This murder of the stoutest pillar of absolutism, the foremost servant of reaction, struck St. Petersburg dumb. Deep silence reigned at the Court. Nobody dared to express any sympathy for the murdered man, and nobody dared to offer a word of condolence to the widow of the hated minister.

Plehve, the great Plehve, before whom a hundred and twenty millions had trembled, had disappeared as if swallowed by the earth. After

the last sound of the murderous explosion nobody heard of him any more. The Court was silent. The press only spoke of the merciless policy of the dead tyrant ; and, wonder of wonders, the censor lost his head and allowed a justification of the murder to be published.

Verily, the moral condition of a nation must be seriously wrong when a crime like this is universally approved, when a crime becomes necessary for the introduction of a stream of refreshing air.

Plehve's murderer, Sazonoff, was captured, but this time they did not try to find any accomplices ; they seemed to understand that all the subjects of the Holstein-Gottorp were in the plot. They dared not hang Sazonoff, and they did not desire to see him pose as a martyr, who by sacrificing his own life had freed the country from a tyrant. Besides, there was no time for a long investigation, for three days later Plehve was followed by Colonel Boguslawski, and rebellions, strikes, and disturbances burst out throughout the whole of the country. The Manchurian army was in revolt, and the whole fabric of absolutism tottered, swayed, and threatened to collapse.

To quell the spirit of rebellion Prince Mirski was appointed to the post of Prime Minister. The Prince manifested the same liberal leanings as Loris Melikoff, and, so it seems, made the bold proposal of the restoration of a Russian Constitution. The Czar listened to Mirski, took the advice of Maria Theodorovna, remembered

Pobiedonosceff, and was afraid of the Grand Dukes.

And again there was quiet throughout Russia. Again Russia waited. Mirski made promises, probably failing to realise that his influence was only tolerated until Kuropatkin's victorious regiments could be used to crush the aspirations of innovators. Nicholas II. agreed with every suggestion, he went with every current, the unconscious humour of an official despatch characterising how he understood his duties in those days full of serious anxiety: "His Majesty condescended to-day to play 'blindman's buff' with his august children." Mirski, however, wished to realise his conciliatory policy and pass from promises to deeds. The Grand Dukes trembled with indignation and rushed to the rescue of absolutism. They stirred up the old and feeble Pobiedonosceff, Maria Theodorovna interviewed the Czar, and, as he was still hesitating, the Grand Duke Sergius was summoned.

And Sergius came from Moscow, accompanied by two men of great importance and experience, men who were able to keep Moscow in a grip of iron for years, and to preserve the Czar's uncle from assassination. Those men were Bulygin and Trepoff, son of the notorious policeman of the days of Alexander II., son of the man at whom Viera Zasulich fired. If in Bulygin Sergius could count on an ambitious acrobat able to make the most difficult somersaults, he must have been proud of Trepoff, for he was able to rival Muravieff the hangman.

The arrival of Sergius at St. Petersburg coincided

with the celebration of the Jordan on January 19th, 1905. The salute of artillery poured lead on the Czar's retinue standing on the Neva and struck even the windows of the Winter Palace.

Was it an accident? It is difficult to say. The only certainty is that in official circles they insisted that the loading of the guns with live cartridges was accidental, but they perhaps betrayed more anxiety in keeping up appearances than was quite necessary.

For years absolutism had used quite different methods. During the reigns of Nicholas I. and Alexander II. the supporters of the government spoke only of the iniquitous plotting of the revolutionaries, using the most bitter language in order to inspire awe and respect for the throne. From the time of Alexander III. all this was changed. Attempts to assassinate became State secrets; political trials and the terrible sentences inflicted were also State secrets. Formerly, for the sake of example, they reported all who were killed, hanged, or deported for being involved in the attempts. Now, from the time of Ignatieff, Tolstoy, Cherevin, or, in a smaller way, Pobiedonossceff, the chief efforts of autocracy had been directed to persuading the world that in Russia there prevailed order, quiet, justice, and love for the Czar-father.

After the Jordan accident there occurred the massacre of the workmen. The Imperial guards, commanded by the Grand Duke Vladimir (Prince Vasilchykoff was substituted that day), gained a famous victory in the Winter Palace Square

over unarmed Russian workmen. The Grand Duke Vladimir displayed on these occasions extraordinary perspicacity and intelligence. Anyone else would have prevented the meeting and frustrated the movement, but the Czar's uncle allowed the enemy to gather and then crushed them.

Nicholas II. fled to Tsarskoye Selo and there hid himself behind a forest of bayonets; he dared not show himself in the capital, which was given over to Trepoff's mercy. Trepoff was allowed to live in the Winter Palace.

These twelve hundred men killed in January, the only victory the Russian army gained during the whole year of the war, was a gauntlet thrown down to all nations who are ruled by the Holstein-Gottorps. From that moment everybody in Russia that was not a policeman, spy, or officer of the Czar was against the government; it was the first link in the chain of the open rebellions, assassinations and robberies that still continue.

That is why the murder of the Procurator of the Finnish Senate, Johnson, was treated as a simple episode, and that even the violent death of the Grand Duke Sergius, on February 17th, 1905, made no great impression.

Sergius was shattered to pieces by a bomb thrown by Kalajeff; Sergius was killed because he gave Trepoff to the Czar. As long as Trepoff watched over Moscow and over the life of his benefactor, Sergius could sleep quietly, for Kalajeff was not the first who had attempted the life of the hated Grand Duke. It is difficult to

say whether Kalajeff executed the death warrant of some revolutionary party or not, for the revolutionary movement in Russia is now so general that it is impossible to know further details until the fires and smoke of the general rebellious conflagration are abated.

Sergius's funeral was celebrated at the Kremlin, and hardly any of the members of the family took part in the obsequies; they were too dismayed to appear. Trepoff alone came from St. Petersburg to render the last homage to his benefactor, but he also was so nervous that he travelled in a military waggon from the railway station in St. Petersburg to the Winter Palace.

Sergius's death produced great results. The absolutists began to moot some concessions, but it was too late, for throughout the whole of Russia dynamite explosions and political murders became so common, so natural, that it would be tedious to enumerate them. Sergius's death was a sign for a general rising of all the Russian revolutionaries.

Was it a revolution, and was it Russian? This expression is too weak, and yet too strong.

It is too strong, for the bloody disturbances which occurred within the boundaries of the Russian Empire were not concentrated and organised revolutionary movements; it is too feeble, for those disturbances rivalled the horrors of the French Revolution in their wholesale tragedy. They represented not simply a contest for political rights, but also for national, religious, agrarian, and social rights.

Then the autocracy spoke again of reforms. For this purpose dozens of various commissions were appointed and showered the most tempting promises among the people, but simply to gain time.

Nicholas II. still hoped that Kuropatkin would at last win a battle and thus give an opportunity for making peace with Japan ; to finish the war without and then crush the war within. The Russian government wanted, above all, to gain time, and with this view they started an agitation that almost amounted to another revolution. The anti-government murders were answered by anti-students, anti-noblemen, anti-Tartar, anti-Armenian, anti-Polish, anti-Estonian, anti-Finnish, and anti-Semitic movements, which consisted in irritating one race against another, thus kindling antagonism and multiplying assassination.

The Caucasus was first to catch the flames that burned even the most humble habitations. A war was raging between Tartars and Armenians. And what of the government ? The government quietly withdrew troops, cut off telegraphic communication, and waited until a good opportunity arose for sending the Cossacks against the exhausted population—to quiet a cemetery.

Amidst this medley of burnings, moanings, complaints, cursings, and threatenings—amidst the roaring of cannon and the clanking of chains, a son was born to Nicholas II. But this boy, Alexis, who two years before would have been a great help to the Czar, who would at least

have saved him from committing so many blunders (at the behest of Maria Theodorovna and Pobiedonosceff), was unable now to disperse the gloomy clouds and to give much hope of a brighter future.

Nicholas II. fortified himself in Tsarskoye Selo and became a voluntary prisoner; but even there, notwithstanding the numerous guards, arrests of pages had to be made, bombs were discovered, and plans for abducting the heir to the throne were divulged.

Russia trembled to its foundations, resounded with the cries of white and red terrorism; while the Czar was constantly looking to the Orient whither Rodjesvenski's fleet was going, and where Stoessel was playing his comedy of heroic defence. But the telegraph acted slower and slower, brought him more and more lies at wider intervals, until at last it lost all its wits for lying. Two loads of holy images, presented to Kuropatkin, who was going to subdue the rebellious Japanese, did not prevent the official thieves of the army from stealing. After Mukden, after the most shameful defeat of an army of half a million, followed the capitulation of Port Arthur; then the Russian navy found its grave at Tsushima, and rebellion threatened the Russian army. The absolutists could not dream even of saving appearances, and were obliged to go to Canossa and sue for peace.

Russia tottered, groaned louder and louder, demanding surrender.

For a change the Czar concealed himself in Peterhoff, and, surrounded by the Cossacks,

drank to their health and distributed roubles among them. The Grand Dukes went abroad, and there they consoled themselves in the old-fashioned way, and always with the money they obtained by official bribery. Trepoff ruled. Trepoff, with the rank of vice-minister, was practically dictator.

As for Nicholas, immediately after the defeat at Tsu-Shima, he issued a manifesto in which he announced his intention of granting his subjects freedom, but he did not forget to issue a ukase, on the strength of which Trepoff was permitted to forbid deeds even allowed by law.

Representatives from the whole of the empire went to St. Petersburg, where they were obliged to fight their way to the Czar, to whom they explained the seriousness of the situation. The Czar was very much moved, tears stood in his eyes, and, shaking hands with the deputies, he said :

“ Our Imperial will to call up the representatives of the people is immutable.”

The deputies beamed with joy, but before they left the palace they received the written text of the Czar's answer, which, to their stupefaction, read as follows :—

“ Our Imperial will is immutable.”

The other words he had used were not there ! Perchance they were omitted by Trepoff, or mayhap the Czar “ was still playing blind-man's buff.” Yes ; consciously or not, he was doing so. Thus, for instance, wishing to tranquillise the people's minds, he issued a pompous manifesto about religious tolerance, and at

last removed Pobiedonosceff. He entrusted Ignatieff, however, the despot who had got rich by building orthodox churches, to put this manifesto into force.

But the defeat at Tsu-Shima, the demoralisation of the army under Linievich, the rebellion of the remnants of the navy in Kronstadt and Sevastopol, the lack of money, and the disorder raging through the whole of the country, sent absolutism to Portsmouth.

To Portsmouth went De Witte, the minister of Alexander III., typical official-reactionary, and the typical man of the time of the "Peacemaker," for he was a liberal holding a knout, a man who had become rich by stealing from the army when he was contractor to it; he was so much the worse than Trepoff by being always perverse and hypocritical. The United States yelled with delight to see such a dignitary. The excited wives and daughters of the Americans fought for a piece of the handkerchief of the man "who, filled with 'humanism,' was called upon to make a peace," and who was going to push Russia on the road to a new birth.

The bargaining was short. Witte got just as much as the Japanese wished to give. The diplomatic "conquest" of Witte was similar to the *naïveté* of an urchin who, having been flogged by his father, answered his companions' inquiries as to the reason of his tears by saying that in buttoning up his trousers he had accidentally hurt himself in the eye.

Meanwhile Europe was in raptures over Witte, admiring his qualities of heart and mind, and con-

gratulating Russia that she had at last got a man. . . . Witte, while coming back from America, was feasted, honoured, and decorated. And Russia? Well, Russia, of Witte's quest, commented upon the comedy played at Portsmouth, and, according to this commentary, Witte agreed to pay a war indemnity of two milliards of roubles on the condition that the Mikado would give him a receipt for three milliards.

But the negotiations at Portsmouth gave courage to the "rebels," and they sprang so many unpleasant surprises on absolutism that on the eve of the signing of peace with Japan the Czar issued still another manifesto, as usual cunning and treacherous, which provided an excuse for another reaction.

Such a manifesto published five years before would have made Nicholas II. the admiration of his subjects. A year before it would have stopped the revolutionary spasm; but now it was one more proof that it is impossible to get anything from absolutism in an honest and loyal way.

This manifesto was in itself a clear proof that the throne was tottering.

Russia answered by strikes, the dimensions of which surpassed everything that had ever been done in that way. The government defended itself stubbornly; it sent forth myrmidons to produce massacres, robberies and murders, and whose most strenuous efforts were directed to causing the division of classes, nationalities, and religions. But the government was already too weak to prevent the federation of secret societies,

for the absolutists were not sure of their most forcible argument, the army.

The federation of secret societies demanded a Constitution. The Caucasus was in flames; Finland refused obedience and formed its own government; in South Russia whole regiments rebelled, Russian men-of-war hoisted red banners, officials fraternised with rebels; Estonia, tormented by "orthodox" Germans, took up arms; the Polish provinces pressed for their rights—not political rights only, but those of citizenship. Trepoff was swimming in blood. The whole of Russia was under martial law; villages were burnt; savage Cossacks massacred innocent people, violated women, flogged the harmless.

Then Trepoff lost his power. Witte, the conqueror at Portsmouth, was appointed Prime Minister, and began by striking his chest in sign of repentance and by shaking hands with those who were at the head of the revolution. Nicholas II. could no more doubt that his subjects were worthy of a Constitution, and issued a constitutional manifesto. Was it constitutional? So it seemed, if one could shut one's eyes to deeds and listen only to words.

For Witte, together with Trepoff and a band of such unprincipled men as Ignatieff, Durnoov, Dubasoff, Neuhard, and *tutti quanti*, held in one hand the manifesto and in the other a knout, and continued lying, swindling, hanging, torturing, and murdering. . . . The Czar munificently returned to Finland that which equally munificently he had wished to take away. He

announced freedom of speech in order to give that freedom over to the mercy of officials; he constituted the "Duma" in order to force its members to obey blindly the "always autocratic" ruler and his ministers.

Russia was convulsed. Faithful, orthodox Moscow built barricades and defended them. Admiral Dubasoff rolled up his sleeves; the Imperial guard rushed bravely to uphold the reputation of the Russian army, and went against the Russian people.

Ten days elapsed—murders in Moscow. For ten days Russian shells tore into pieces the heart of Russia; for ten days they spared neither revolutionaries nor women. The Siemionovski regiment distinguished itself so well that it was envied by other regiments of guards.

Nicholas II. drank to the health of his brave boys, and those brave boys of his, intoxicated with alcohol, loaded with roubles and orders, murdered men, violated women, and robbed everyone.

Reaction had the upper hand—the Russian Empire grew quieter.

Vladivostok was burnt; the whole of Siberia resounded with the moanings of the wretched Manchurian marauders, for was there not Rennenkampff, the brave general, who slaughtered half of the population of Siberia? There was the whole pack of the bloodhounds, who wished to redeem the cowardice they had shown in the war by now killing defenceless persons.

And what about Estonia, South Russia, Central Russia, East, West, North?

Would a hundred thousand corpses suffice—victims of absolutism during two years—to defend their rights?

Will it not be sufficient to state that in six months after the Constitution was proclaimed, the number of political prisoners reached seventy thousand people? None of the wild commanders under Attila or Tamerlane accomplished such deeds of barbarity as were accomplished in Estonia by Russian troops commanded by such "orthodox" Germans as Sacken, or such savage brigands as Orloff!

Is this the end of the struggle? Is this the last blood to be poured out in the country ruled by the man who so often speaks about his love towards his subjects?

Is it not time to put a stop to the cruelties, atrocities, and barbarities of darkest Russia under the sceptre of the high-handed, merciless, hopeless family of Holstein-Gottorp? Will the subjects of the White Czar be satisfied with the political swindle called a Constitution, and believe that it is the Czar's olive branch?

Russia kills. Russia is still struggling desperately in the embrace of the vampire of absolutism. At the helm the dignitaries are changed from time to time; but the fact is that Witte is only the brother of Trepoff, and Goremkine that of Witte. All of them came out of the same barbarous school of police; all of them willing to stay as long as possible at the gold-yielding source of power: *pereat mundus fiat absolutismus!*

Nicholas II. may again desire the good of his subjects, but who is to tell him of what that good consists? The one who was taught from his childhood that his only duty is to render an account to God, can he know what is the essence of national good? Is the reigning ruler to be responsible for the wrongs of centuries, or has the hour of absolutism passed? Will he for the rest of his days and of his own will remain in Peterhoff?

It is dusk! And from that dusk is heard the constant noise of stubborn fighting and atrocious murders.

And Europe?

Europe did and does its best. She looks with her pale, cynical eyes on the murderous work. She sighs over the miserable lot of the Czar's subjects, but she is equally ready to bow to Nicholas II., who has made his purple more red by the terrible shedding of blood, as she would bow to a president of a Russian Republic even if his hands were soiled with the murdered Czar's blood.

But as things are for the moment a trifle better, Europe dries her tears with Russian roubles and subscribes the Russian loan twenty times over. Well, it brings five per cent.!

However, Europe is so tired of the pan-Russian disturbance that she would be very pleased if it were over, so as to permit her to express her views concerning "humanism," universal disarmament, and the rights of horses, dogs, rats, and parrots.

Thousands or hundreds of thousands more

corpses may be demanded. No one can yet foresee when quiet will prevail—the quiet that will be necessary for preparing for fresh brotherly murders. Again there will resound muffled, empty words, unintelligible to great minds that have great aims and believe in the commandment, “Thou shalt not kill !”

Civilisation will smile sentimentally and will answer sadly :

“ My life comes from death ! ”

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